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48-PAGE MAGAZINE

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GOING TO BLAZES**

PLUS COMMENT, ARTS, SHOPPING,
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**SPAIN'S NEW SPORT:
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COVER STORY

US reels as 80 die, 1,120 hurt in huge embassy bombings

BY ANDREW MARSHALL
in Washington

BOMBS RIPPED through the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam yesterday, killing as many as a hundred and wounding more than 1,000.

Bill Clinton said yesterday that America would use every means possible to find those responsible.

"We are determined to get answers, and justice," the President said.

The bombs revive bitter memories of the explosions which destroyed the US Marine barracks and embassy in Beirut in 1983; but also of the Federal building in Oklahoma City, carried out by American right-wing extremists. Yet with no clear indications as to who might have carried out the attacks, the US government was

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Low security made soft targets;
US starts to line up
the suspects
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left grieving once again. "To the families and loved ones of the American and African victims of these cowardly attacks, you are in our thoughts and prayers," said the President.

The US Air Force sent military aircraft loaded with supplies and medical staff to both countries and FBI investigators from the Foreign Emergency Support Team were to fly to both cities with military and intelligence staff.

The embassy in Kenya was torn apart by a huge explosion at 10.35 local time. The bomb was apparently in a Mitsubishi car parked in the embassy car park. Though aimed at the US embassy, it also destroyed a five-storey block next door which housed offices and a secretarial college, bringing it almost to the ground.

Hundreds were injured by glass shards which flew hundreds of feet and a bus that was driving past was destroyed. Many fled the scene, badly wounded and a cloud of smoke cloaked the area.

Twenty people were confirmed dead, with the death toll expected to top 80. As many as 60 were believed to be trapped in the tangled wreckage. At



An injured man is helped from the wreckage in Nairobi as rescuers swarm over the rubble that was a four-storey office building just minutes before

Reuters

least eight were Americans, including two relatives of embassy employees. Seven other Americans were missing.

More than 1,000 people were injured and hospitals were overwhelmed as casualties arrived by ambulance, taxi, bus and private cars. The US ambassador, Candace Bushnell, was slightly injured.

The embassy is in the centre of Nairobi and the blast sparked panic across the city. Uniformed US Marines and police tried to maintain order, while the fire brigade tried to control fires in cars.

The blast in Tanzania followed a few minutes later, apparently also from a car parked near the embassy, which is in a residential suburb of Dar es Salaam. It destroyed the entrance to the embassy, set cars on fire and turned the compound into a "war zone", said

a witness. Six people were killed, including three Tanzanian guards and two Tanzanian employees at the embassy, and 50 injured. Two-thirds of the embassy was destroyed.

The question of responsibility for the blast remained a mystery. There was no immediate warning, and no claim afterwards. There has been no history of attacks on US facilities or civilians in Kenya or Tanzania, or indeed in Africa as a whole.

Though the US media quickly blamed the attack on Middle Eastern groups, previous incidents - the Oklahoma bomb, carried out by white Christian Americans, and a TWA airliner which apparently exploded after a mechanical fault - made any speculation a high-risk activity.

The US has received a series of warnings this year from Islamic groups that it would be attacked. On 12 June, the State department issued a general warning after Osama Bin Laden, a Saudi Arabian national who has been an influential financier of radical Islamic groups, threatened US targets all over the world but that warning was specifically in reference to the Middle East and South Asia.

Earlier this week, Jihad, an Egyptian group, said that it would attack Americans after the US assisted in extractions from Albania to Egypt.

In March, the US Embassy in Islamabad warned Americans that there had been threats to their security.

But none of this makes it certain that any group in particular targeted the US and most responsible experts counselled caution over any attribution of responsibility.

IN NAIROBI, the blast at 10.35 a.m. (0735 GMT) toppled the four-storey Uhundi Co-operative building on top of the US embassy. Windows 10 blocks away were shattered. Several people on two passing buses were killed by shrapnel, witnesses said. Bloodied clothing and papers littered the streets as crowds crawled over a mountain of twisted and broken concrete and metal looking for victims, calling out and waving for help to free trapped people.

Boards were draped out of the windows of a charred bus.

Mangled cars were shoulder-high on the street amid the debris.

BY CREGE MBITIRU
in Nairobi

bris. Dazed and bloody survivors lay until rescuers led them away. Passers-by joined the rescuers and others ferried the injured to hospitals in cars.

More than 1,100 people were being treated in three hospitals.

In Dar es Salaam, blackened debris was strewn around the US embassy and at the front of the building was a mangled, scorched car wreck.

"Everyone's shocked. Very scared," said a US official at the embassy. "Our families are waking up this very moment to

hear about the bomb. You can imagine how worried they are."

One witness, Jim Owen told CNN: "Glass was flying - I found myself about 5 feet (1.5 meters) from where I was sitting." He said one woman was injured when a wall collapsed on her, and another had her nose ripped off.

Officials in the US, Kenya and Tanzania refused to speculate on who was responsible.

"I can say if any of our people or embassies are being targeted, we are not going to tolerate it," said Bill Richardson, US ambassador to the United Nations.

The US ambassador to Kenya, Prudence Bushnell, was cut on the lip and helped from the ruins of the Co-operative Bank House, where she had just given a news conference, said US Embassy spokesman Bill Barr.

As night fell in Dar es Salaam, the US embassy building, two miles north of the city centre and near the Indian Ocean shore guarded by US Marines and Tanzanian riot police.

In Nairobi, rescuers toiled among the debris beneath huge studio lights illuminating the wrecked embassy.

BA tries to scupper rivals with 2m cheap flights

BY SIMON CALDER
Travel Editor

BRITISH AIRWAYS is launching an attack designed to inflict maximum harm on its low-fare rivals by staging this weekend an unprecedented "summer sale".

The airline says it is selling 2 million seats at cut prices because of sluggish bookings during the World Cup. But many of the deepest discounts are on routes down by no-frills com-

"This sale has been sparked by the football factor," said BA's director of marketing, Martin George. "We wanted to have a really spectacular summer sale, so we decided to go for one massive hit over one weekend."

The "massive hit", equivalent to 5,000 Jumbo jets, will soak up much of the available demand for travel during the rest of the year. The self-be-

ginning at 9am today and continues till midnight tomorrow. BA's flagship store in Regent Street, central London, is open until 9pm tonight.

Other BA Travel Shops will open tomorrow, and the airline will also be taking reservations through a special website and by telephone. Hundreds of extra staff have been drafted to call centres at Belfast, Glas-

gow, Manchester and Newcastle. Although bookings must be made by midnight on Sunday, the period for which the outbound flights can be taken extends to the end of November, with returns possible until 30 December.

This year BA has faced intense competition from low-cost airlines, and in June it launched its own low-cost off-

shoot, Go, which it is now actually undercutting on routes to Copenhagen and Lisbon.

Rivalry is most intense on flights to Nice, where BA takes on easyJet, Debonair and AB Airlines, as well as a British Midland/Air France joint operation. BA's promotional fare from London is just £79 return (including £17 tax), compared with a full economy fare of £88.

Scandinavia has been singled out for deals that appear to be below cost, with a flat fare of £89 from London to any of the four capital cities. The target appears to be Ryanair, which has flights from Stansted to airports near Oslo, Stockholm and Malmo, Berlin, to which AB Airlines recently began flying from Gatwick, is on offer at £79.

Fares from regional airports

have been cut drastically too. Flights to European cities start at £69 return to Paris from regional airports such as Aberdeen, Birmingham and Manchester. Glasgow-Madrid and Edinburgh-Rome are on offer at £99 - for a return journey of more than 2,500 miles.

■ *Weekend Review*, page 19, for full details of how to maximise the potential of this offer.

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PULL-CUT

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The former MI5 agent David Shayler yesterday met his lawyer for the first time since his arrest in Paris last Saturday
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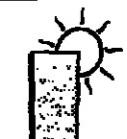
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With parts of the Yangtze notching up new flood records the fight is becoming a matter of life and death
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England dismissed the South Africans for 252 - a first innings lead of just 22 - in the final Test at Headingly yesterday
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SPORT
England dismissed the South Africans for 252 - a first innings lead of just 22 - in the final Test at Headingly yesterday
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Very dry, very hot and very PIMM'S all day.



NORTHERN IRELAND'S HARD MEN WHO COULD WALK FREE



Patrick Magee



Sean Kelly



Johnny 'Mad Dog' Adair



Michael Stone



William Moore



Balcombe Street gang

Mastermind of 1984 bomb attack on Tory conference in Brighton which killed five people. Trial judge called him "a man of exceptional cruelty and inhumanity" and recommended minimum sentence of 35 years. Scheduled by Home Office to serve "whole life tariff". Now 47, he married in jail to American novelist Barbara Byer.

Serving 25 years for 1993 bomb attack on Shankill Road fish shop which killed nine Protestants. Intended victim was Johnny Adair (right) who had earlier held a meeting in an upstairs room. Trial judge condemned attack as one of worst atrocities in history of the province. Now aged 23, he was not due to have sentence reviewed until 2003.

Leader of the loyalist UFF/UDA in the Maze prison, he was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment in 1995 for directing terrorism. Intelligence sources believe he was responsible for killing up to 12 Catholics in attacks on bars and houses, and was also involved in the planning of others. Now aged 33, he was not due for release until 2003.

UDA member who launched grenade and gun attack on 1988 funerals of three IRA members shot dead by the SAS in Gibraltar. Police arrested him as he fled from Milltown Cemetery in Belfast; otherwise he would have been almost certainly killed by mourners. Life sentence with recommended minimum of 30 years. Now aged 42.

One of the Shankill Butchers, the gang whose story was made into the film *Resurrection Man*. They killed 19 Catholics by slitting their throats. Moore, 49, supplied the knives and cleavers and drove the taxi in which the gang toured Belfast. He admitted 11 murders in court and the judge said he should never be released.

Martin O'Connell (above), Eddie Butler, Harry Duggan and Hugh Doherty carried out two-year IRA bombing and murder campaign in 1970s, including Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings which killed seven people. Arrested and jailed for life after six-day London siege in 1976. Described by Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams as "our Nelson Mandela".

Fury and forgiveness at IRA release

THE RELEASE of an IRA man who murdered Lord Mountbatten and three others in a bomb attack was greeted yesterday with scathing criticism by some politicians, but with a message of forgiveness by the father of one of the victims.

Unionist politicians described the freeing of Thomas McMahon under the Good Friday agreement as appeasing terrorism.

But John Maxwell, whose

BY KIM SENGUPTA

son was killed in the attack in 1979, said he was willing to accept it in the interests of strengthening the peace process.

Paul Maxwell, 15, died alongside Lord Mountbatten, his 14-year-old grandson, Nicholas Knatchbull, and the 83-year-old Dowager Lady Brabourne, mother of Lord Mountbatten's son-in-law, when the IRA blew up their

boat, *Shadow V*, off Sligo. On the same day 18 paratroopers were killed in an ambush at Warrenpoint, County Down.

Mr Maxwell, from Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, said: "Thomas McMahon has served his time and if he is no longer a danger to society, he should be released. Keeping him in prison will not bring my son back, unfortunately. Peace is the imperative now, and we must look forward so that per-

haps Paul's death and those of thousands of others from both sides of the political divide here will not have been entirely in vain."

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said the Queen and the Prince of Wales, who was particularly close to Lord Mountbatten, had been told of the decision. McMahon, 50, was freed from Mountjoy Prison, in Dublin, after serving 19 years. In 1993 he signed a

declaration severing his IRA links and had since been let out on a temporary basis to do a carpentry course as part of his rehabilitation scheme.

It was also disclosed yesterday that two Scots Guards jailed for the murder of a Catholic man in Belfast in 1992 may be freed soon. And it was announced that 400 terrorist inmates, including murderers, have received the paperwork which may see them out in

the streets within a matter of months.

The Scots Guards, Jim Fisher, 29, of Ayr, and Mark Wright, 24, from Arbroath, were jailed for life for shooting dead 18-year-old Peter McBride in the New Lodge area of Belfast. Wright's MP, Andrew Welsh, said: "Mo Mowlam [Secretary of State for Northern Ireland] told me she would reach a decision at the end of the month, although

obviously she couldn't tell me what that decision would be. But she has the chance to free the guardsmen, since ex-terrorist prisoners are being released that makes the position of the soldiers even more unjust."

Mr McBride's parents, Peter and Jean, have been campaigning to keep Fisher and Wright in jail. Mrs McBride said: "Keeping them in jail doesn't do me any good, but at least I know someone is being punished for murdering my son."

A woman whose husband was killed by Ulster Volunteer Force terrorists said she was thinking of leaving Northern Ireland to show her disgust at the early release of prisoners.

Sandra Peacock, whose husband, Jim, was shot in 1993, said: "Myra Hindley's still in jail after 30 years ... If she'd tried to get out of jail there would be a public outcry and

you'd never hear the end of it. In Northern Ireland we have mass-murderers as well, but they are only doing a few years and then going home to their wives and girlfriends. Life, for them, should mean life."

Peter Robinson, Democratic Unionist Party MP for Belfast East, accused the British and Irish governments of releasing republican prisoners with "indecent haste". He said: "It is simply a case of clearing their jails of republican prisoners as quickly as they can. These are prisoners who have carried out the foulest deeds ... this is nothing to do with justice, this is entirely a political decision."

Andrew Mackay, Conservative spokesman on Northern Ireland, said it was "regrettable" that Dublin was prematurely releasing prisoners when terrorist groups were not co-operating with decommissioning weapons.

City braces itself for marchers

and denial of their rights.

Strenuous efforts have been made to keep the lid on trouble with a series of pageants and shows in Londonderry for both communities. Alastair Simpson, and Donncha MacNialais, the leaders of the Bogside Residents Group, both asked yesterday for troublemakers to stay away.

Mr Simpson said: "We are looking forward to a peaceful and enjoyable day. For anyone who wishes to be in the city for any other reason, we would ask them to stay at home. Confrontation is not welcome."

Mr MacNialais added: "The eyes of the world will be on Derry this weekend, and the nationalist community must continue to demonstrate the firm discipline and resolve which it has shown since the start of the present Drumcree crisis."

Out in the streets, however, the mood was one of caution and suspicion rather than euphoria. Londonderry has seen some of the worst excesses of the troubles - the brutal suppression of the civil rights marches, Bloody Sunday and a ferocious IRA bombing campaign.

At the fashionable Strand Bac Catholic Paul Corrigan, 29, said: "We are fairly cynical around here. It's very pleasing, of course, to see the Apprentice Boys talking to the Bogside Residents. But how much control will they have over the hangers-on? There will be all these feeder marches coming into Derry and some of them will be looking for a fight."

Across the River Foyle on the loyalist areas of the East Bank, the march is not viewed as an historical curiosity but a matter of tradition and heritage. At 61, Alex Smith has seen many Apprentice Boys parades and believes the opposition to them has been fermenting by Nationalists.

He said: "In the past we used to have Roman Catholics and Protestants watching the celebrations together, and then drinking and singing together afterwards."

"The trouble is created by Sinn Fein and their agitators. We, the Protestant people, are once again being stopped from doing what is our right. It is shameful."

KIM SENGUPTA

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Street gang

London residents, Eddie Boag and Hugh Dennis, say that the British Asian community has been causing problems in their neighbourhoods.

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MPs told: Don't assist forced marriages

MEMBERS OF Parliament have been asked to stop interfering in immigration applications following reports in *The Independent* showing they were unwittingly contributing to an increase in forced marriages.

A senior parliamentary committee has warned that members of all parties were inadvertently causing some young British Asians to be married against their will while immigration officials were trying to help them. According to

BY STEVE BOGGAN

a report by the Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, problems arise when MPs agree to constituents' requests for them to write to British Entry Clearance Officers (ECOs) in Islamabad, Pakistan, asking for visa applications for new spouses to be speeded up. The applications relate to Pakistani-born husbands or brides who have recently married British Asians and are

awaiting clearance. The vast majority of these cases are genuine but a tiny proportion relate to forced marriages which the British Asian spouses oppose. Because of family pressure and coercion, however, many feel obliged to marry against their will.

In some cases, officials in Islamabad are privately asked for help by the victim. But their efforts to refuse a visa for the unwanted spouse are stymied when well-meaning MPs inter-

fere on behalf of the unwilling spouse's family.

The committee says: "If a Member makes representations in such a case, perhaps at the behest of the sponsor's parents following an arranged marriage, and the ECO has no other grounds for refusing a visa, the likely outcome is that one will be issued, thus forcing a couple together against their joint will."

The committee said the situation has worsened since

Labour abolished the "primary purpose" rule, which said a spouse's application could be rejected if it appeared that the sole reason for the marriage was to gain access to the UK.

What MPs must consider, however, is that since the rule's abolition, many more genuine applicants who had been kept apart have been allowed entry to be with their loved ones.

The Independent revealed how hundreds of second and third generation Asian women

were running away from home after fearing they could be forced into a marriage they did not want. As a result, there was a huge growth in the use of "bounty hunters" who tracked them down and returned them to their families.

Ann Cryer found she was regularly asked to help speed up visa applications after being elected as Labour MP for Keighley. However, after a time, she refused unless she could personally meet the bride on

whose part she was supposed to be intervening.

"When I asked [the fathers] whether I could speak to their daughters, I was almost always told they were too shy," she said.

"I decided to refuse to be involved unless the daughter came to see me so I could be sure she was not forced into the marriage. Now that word of that decision has got round, I don't seem to be asked for that kind of help."

The select committee would now like MPs to follow Mrs Cryer's example.

It concluded: "We cannot believe that any of our colleagues would knowingly wish to play a part in forcing a couple together in this way. This is a very difficult area for all concerned, but we urge our colleagues to be aware of the fact that on occasion there is a risk that they may unwittingly be party to bringing about such a situation."

Disgraced peer out of jail on a Harley

IT WAS a passion for classic cars that precipitated Lord Brocket's downfall. So his decision to depart from prison yesterday astride a gleaming Harley-Davidson motorcycle was equivalent to sticking two fingers up at authority.

This, after all, is the man who boasted to one of his accomplices in the £4.5m insurance scam that landed him in jail: "Don't tell me about the law. I make the law."

But it may be that, after two-and-a-half years behind bars, the third Baron Brocket has shed the arrogance of unearned wealth and privilege.

He certainly seemed eager to convey that impression yesterday. As he left Springhill open prison in Buckinghamshire, he told reporters: "You really appreciate freedom once you've been inside. It makes you reassess life and all your priorities and what is important and what is not."

Dressed in jeans and leather, Lord Brocket, whose family name is Charles Nall-Cain, said: "I have had a lot of time to reflect on everything. I obviously regret very much the distress I have caused everyone."

Former Prisoner HG-1031 has much to reflect upon as he contemplates the debris of his shattered life.

He still has his title, but he has lost his wife, his children, his home and his reputation.

His lawyers told the Appeal Court last November during an unsuccessful attempt to secure him an earlier release, that he had endured "a fall of almost Faust-like proportions". The

BY KATHY MARKS

It was far shabbier than those grandiose words suggest. Faced with £16m debts, partly amassed from building up his collection of nearly three dozen classic cars, Lord Brocket hatched a desperate and audacious scheme.

In 1991, in the middle of the night, he dismantled three Ferraris and a Maserati and hid the pieces around the 5,000-acre grounds of Brocket Hall, his family seat in Hertfordshire, now leased to hotel developers to pay off the debts.

Lord Brocket claimed the cars had been stolen and pursued his sceptical insurers for three years, even bringing a lawsuit against them.

It was his wife, Isa Lorenzo, a former model, who gave the game away, telling police about the fraud when she was arrested for forging drug prescriptions.

He served just half of the five-year sentence handed down at Luton Crown Court in February 1996.

Although attacked and threatened by fellow inmates, he managed to adapt to life "inside" and received an apparently warm send-off yesterday.

The turquoise Harley-Davidson Fatboy - retail value £14,000 - was left in the Springhill car park for him an hour before he emerged.

Before he left, he shook hands with a group of warders and wished them all the best. A former fellow inmate shouted: "Good luck, Charlie!" as he rode off.

A prison officer said: "His Lordship was quite a character."



Lord Brocket set for a quick exit from Springhill prison yesterday after completing his sentence for a £4.5m insurance scam involving rare sports cars

Tom Pilston

Oxbridge defends its MAs against the modernisers

BY BEN RUSSELL

Education Correspondent

to oversee academic standards, has launched a review of degree titles in the hope of ending the confusion over the huge number of different awards made by universities.

Many academics regard the MA degrees from the two universities as a misleading anomaly, because they are granted automatically to Bachelor of Arts graduates without any extra work. At all other universities, students can only earn the Master of Arts title after a year's postgraduate study.

Lord Brocket, 46, looking slimmer than in pre-prison days, said his first priority was

PhDs are awarded to people who do not study philosophy."

The QAA has already come under fire from some academics who fear setting standards for universities will impose a national curriculum for higher education.

A spokeswoman for the QAA played down the review.

She said: "The QAA has no powers to change the descriptions of awards, although we would hope to move things forward. We are trying to put them into some national framework, so that the university sector and the public can easily see what awards mean."

A Cambridge spokesman added: "There's no harm in having a review, but it would need to consider for example whether a PhD, Doctor of Philosophy, is appropriate because

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Fringe jumps the gun on Edinburgh

THE EDINBURGH Festival opens next week - only it doesn't. The biggest arts festival in the world has thrown punters into confusion following a decision by performers on the Fringe to start early because it might be too cold in Scotland by the end of August.

The unprecedented move to start the Fringe early has been ignored by the main international festival and the prestigious book and film fests, all of which are sticking to the usual starting date of Sunday 16 August.

But the Fringe will begin its round of plays and stand-up comedy this weekend, because, according to Fringe director Hilary Strong, the anarchic, irreverent and challenging performers are worried about the cold.

She said: "The Fringe performers are motivated to change the dates by the fact that the third week of the festival following the bank holiday Monday has traditionally been much quieter and the weather frequently not as pleasant."

But Ms Strong and the Fringe seem as confused as everyone else. Though the

BY DAVID LISTER
Arts News Editor

Fringe starts this weekend, Fringe Sunday, which traditionally starts the Fringe Festival with an open air performance and children's shows, will not take place until next Sunday, 16 August.

For the festival's army of agents, wannabe actors and directors and networkers, this is a nightmare.

Paul Blackman, director of the Roundhouse in London, said yesterday: "No one knows when to go. The networkers are distraught. They don't know where to go and work the rooms."

Mr Blackman said over 90 per cent of the comedy acts can also be seen in London, though he added that there was no substitute for "the buzz of Edinburgh and being able to see three or more shows in an evening".

The Fringe's early start has angered International festival director Brian McMaster. A spokeswoman for Mr McMaster said: "We think it's a great shame the people who will lose out are the audiences.

What makes Edinburgh great is the critical mass, the choice you get when all the festivals are running together."

Despite the shadow cast by the festivals falling out, this year promises some high class entertainment.

The international festival's music programme ranges from a residency by the Royal Opera to concerts of Scottish harp music.

The Fringe is its normal eclectic self with British premières for plays by Sam Shepard and Dario Fo, three men turning Chekhov's *Three Sisters* into a gay musical and comedian Arthur Smith staging a play on a putting green.

British premières of Robert Redford's *The Horse Whisperer*, the glam rock movie *Velvet Goldmine*, and *Prima Colors*, none too loosely based on the Clintons, are among the highlights of the film festival.

Novelist Fay Weldon gives The Scotsman Millennium Lecture at the book festival Entitled Adam and Eve and Tony Blair, the subject is men, women and politics in the 20th century.

THE WELSH Secretary, Ron Davies, was yesterday promoted from Tony Blair's inner circle to another magic circle. He was transformed into a Druid at the National Eisteddfod, the annual celebration of Welsh culture and tradition.

After a solemn procession to a ring of standing stones at Bridgend, Glamorgan, Mr Davies was officially admitted into the Gorsedd of Bards, the Eisteddfod's ruling body.

The cabinet minister, in long white robes, and flowing head-dress, Mr Davies was hard to spot among the 27 other similarly garbed newcomers presented to Archdruid Dafydd Rowlands, who presided at the 200-year-old ceremony.

Heralds blew fanfares, a harpist played and flower girls danced in a ritual more artistic and colourful than most of the parliamentary customs Mr Davies is used to at Westminster.

Eisteddfod officials, who observe a strict all-Welsh rule, made no concessions for the Welsh Secretary who is not a fluent speaker, although he is an enthusiastic learner. Politicians are rarely



Ron Davies, the Welsh Secretary, with fellow Druids after the formal initiation ceremony at the National Eisteddfod yesterday

Davies the Druid officially Bard in Wales

received into the celebrated Celtic band of poets, musicians, writers and artists. But Mr Davies was singled out for his work in steering through the Government's devolution plans.

He had played "a determined role at a crucial period in the history of Wales", said the citation read out by Eisteddfod official Huw Thomas.

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Fraudbuster hero branded a racist

A HOUSING official landed by MPs for flushing out benefit fraud has been branded racist by an industrial tribunal.

Bernard Crofton, whose tenure as housing director in Britain's poorest borough was plagued by controversy, was found to have discriminated four times against a colleague.

During his seven years at Hackney Council in east London, Mr Crofton devoted his energies to rooting out housing benefit fraud but he caused major split when he claimed Sam Yeboah, the council's personnel director, was failing to tackle recruitment irregularities among west Africans.

Mr Crofton was dismissed and later re-instated but an internal inquiry in 1996 by Ian Macdonald, QC, accused him of being a liar and gaining re-instatement to his £70,000-a-year job by deception. The inquiry found Mr Yeboah had been "gravely wronged and shabbily treated".

In spite of that, Mr Crofton

BY STEVE BOGGAN

continued to be backed by some newspapers, was portrayed as a victim in a number of BBC documentaries and earned generous support from the cross-party Commons Social Services Committee, whose chairman, Frank Field, said it was "vital" Mr Crofton remain.

Mr Yeboah took Mr Crofton and Hackney Council to an industrial tribunal after leaving his job because of the recruitment allegations. Yesterday, after 103 days, the tribunal found unanimously that both had racially discriminated against him on several counts.

The full findings and the damages to be awarded will follow. The council refused to comment until then but it is understood there is relief that a further claim that chief executive, Tony Elliston, discriminated against Mr Yeboah was rejected.

"I feel completely vindicated," Mr Yeboah said last night.

"I was always confident that the tribunal would deliver justice. It has been a nightmare, a most harrowing experience. I believe my career has been completely ruined.... The chances of another employer employing me are very slim."

In the Macdonald report, Mr Crofton was accused of fostering an atmosphere in which black employees were subjected to a witch hunt and where, on one occasion, the names of 600 employees were secretly passed to the Immigration Department for checking.

The report said: "Certain individuals exhibited the corporate view that 'too many bloody Africans' were being appointed to jobs in Housing. 'African' became synonymous with fraud... which in turn fed the myth of a great West African conspiracy."

"I have... come to the conclusion that the allegations are without foundation."

Mr Crofton failed to return calls yesterday.

IN BRIEF

Exploratory cancer operation for jailed bank swindler Leeson

NICK LEESON, the 31-year-old rogue trader jailed in Singapore, is to have an operation next week to discover how far his colon cancer has spread, his sister Sara, 21, said yesterday. It has already affected his lymph nodes. Leeson is serving six and a half years for financial scams which broke Barings Bank in 1995 with debts of £260m.

Dismissal costs Al Fayed £90,000

MOHAMED AL FAYED'S company Liberty Publishing and Media was yesterday ordered by the High Court to pay about £90,000 to television producer Mike Hollingsworth for failing to give him six months notice by summarily dismissing him as managing director of Liberty Broadcasting.

Priest jailed for assaulting boys

A CATHOLIC priest was jailed for nine years yesterday for 12 indecent assaults on boys under 16 and three charges of indecency with a child. Bradford Crown Court heard how David Crowley, 44, plied boys with drink before getting them to take part in orgies at his presbytery.

Paracetamol packs recalled

HALF a million packs of paracetamol tablets were recalled yesterday because they carry the wrong dosage instructions. About 400,000 of 16- and 32-caplet packs delivered to Tesco supermarkets and Co-op and Unichem pharmacies carry the wrong instructions for children's dosage.

Solicitor struck off

A SCOTTISH solicitor who falsified divorce papers and paid £15,000 to clients out of his own pocket has been struck off by his colleagues. A disciplinary tribunal found Kenneth Anderson, of Linlithgow guilty of misleading clients.

HOWARD JACOBSON

Who better to be among than the Cornish when the planets start playing up?

— WEEKEND REVIEW, PAGE 5

Beat the jams with 'rat run' roadmaps

BY RANDEEP RAMESH
Transport Correspondent

A GUIDE on how to avoid traffic jams on some of the most congested motorways in Britain will be launched next week amid claims by motoring organisations it was a "rat runners' charter".

The Birmingham *Jam-buster Guide* details routes for skirting clogged up stretches of the M5, M6 and M42 — which can be congested with traffic for more than five hours a day.

It ran into immediate opposition from motoring organisations. The AA said it would endanger lives by creating dangerous rat-runs through quiet residential areas.

"These roads are basically inappropriate for the levels of traffic that could be sent there," said a spokesman for the AA. "What you could see is a lot of high speed traffic zooming through quiet urban areas."

Give Way, the company which is producing the guide, denied it would result in speeding traffic on residential roads.

Caroline Oliver, marketing manager, said: "We have extensively researched the routes and most of the roads are used by the police as diversions."

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Never mind the spin, a fearless week leaves Frank still fighting

LESS THAN a month ago, he was the second Beveridge, the towering intellect who would revolutionise the Welfare State and confirm Tony Blair's destiny as a great reforming Prime Minister. Today, as he finally starts his summer holiday, Frank Field is back in the role of the outsider, a voice in the wilderness shunned by ministers and despised by New Labour apparatchiks.

No more ministerial red boxes, no access to Whitehall's research machinery, not even a chauffeur. Worst of all for this deceptively ambitious politician, no power.

Even by the breakneck speed standards of the modern political demise, it has been a pretty spectacular fall from grace.

This was the man who would, in a phrase that has come to take on a haunting irony for both him and his opponents, "think the unthinkable" on social policy.

After years on the back-benches and a lifetime working on poverty and benefits issues, his elevation to the rank of minister seemed to confirm the visionary spirit of the new Government.

He had the ear of the Prime Minister with whom he shared a deeply held Christian conviction that the restoration of self-reliance should form a centrepiece of welfare reform. He was made a Privy Councillor, appointed to a key cabinet committee on long-term Government spending, and given the task of drawing up a Green Paper on benefit and pensions changes.

Feted by Left and Right for his forthright opinions and innovative policy ideas, there seemed nothing the man could do wrong.

"He was like a child in a sweet shop," one colleague said. "For years, he had been Britain's unofficial expert on welfare and now he had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to actually carry out his pet ideas."

But as long ago as last year his enemies began talking about Mr Field's inability to come up with practical means of implementing his laudable ideals of cutting welfare bills and ending the dependency culture. Crucially, the Chancellor was opposed to many of his ideas on pensions and mean testing.

The briefing against him began in earnest this spring, with Alastair Darling's name presciently mentioned to those around him as a possible successor. It has since become clear that his frequent disagree-

ments with the Social Security Secretary, Harriet Harman, ran deeper than a mere personal clash.

He made it known to his close friends that he wanted "executive responsibility", a curiously arcane Field-like shorthand for a Cabinet post. He wanted Harriet's job. And nothing else.

Already, it appeared that this slightly-built, diffident man was not simply a policy wonk or a benefits nerd with his head in the clouds.

For those who witnessed his bitter fight to rid his local party of Militant and fend off deselection in the 1980s and 1990s, it was no surprise that the Field steel showed itself. "He was, after all, politician first, policy-maker second," one MP said.

Yet when the Prime Minister rejected his plea to join the Cabinet, the minister notorious for his loathing of half-measures felt he had no option but to resign.

His shock departure last Monday ruined the Government's attempts to present the reshuffle as a tidy piece of management, and kicked off 12 days of mid-summer trouble that left Labour looking defensive and vindictive.

First reports claimed that it was an amicable parting, with Mr Field rejecting other jobs and being told he still has a direct line to Downing Street. But there were already semi-official suggestions that Mr Field had gone because he had "failed to deliver".

Two days later he used an emotional Commons personal statement to accuse Chancellor Gordon Brown of frustrating his reform plans, singling him out as the main obstacle to his ideas for compulsory second pensions.

Mr Blair and Mr Brown walked out of the chamber as the ex-minister rose to deliver his statement. Downing Street denied Mr Brown had been obstructive and suggested Mr Field had been too theoretical. Mr Blair's spokesman saying: "It's time to get the job done and not just talk about it."

A couple of days later, Mr Brown went on the offensive, telling the Daily Mail that Mr Field's proposals would have cost the taxpayer "billions".

The mud-slinging reached its height last Saturday when the Prime Minister's official spokesman, attacked Mr Field's ability as a minister. "Frank said he only wanted to serve at Cabinet



The fight goes on: Frank Field speaking at the Social Market Foundation on welfare reform in London this week

Stefan Rousseau/PA

level but the Prime Minister

saw the view that his talents

were not best suited to running

a department," he was quoted

as saying.

Ministers and spin doctors

were furious at a media blitz by

Mr Field in the Sunday Times,

the People and the Sunday

Telegraph. In the Sunday Tele-

graph, he stated that Treasury

plans for a means-tested min-

imum pension would "send out

a message that if you don't

save and instead spend all your

money, the guaranteed pen-

sion will be still there waiting

for you. It is a corrupting in-

fluence."

The negative briefings then

began in earnest, with the bit-

ter exchanges since the

Government took office last

year Mr Field was described as

a "failed joke" and his ideas

were "paltry and unpublis-

able".

This Monday, Downing

Street attempted to distance

the Prime Minister from the

row. "We are not engaged in a

war of words with Frank Field,"

a spokesman said.

But the Birkenhead MP was

so stung by the attacks on his

character that he decided to go

on Radio 2's Jimmy Young

Show and promptly dubbed

Labour "spin doctors" as a

"cancer" at the heart of Gov-

ernment.

"In the long run, you cannot

run a Government like this. It's

a cancer that will eat away at

the heart of our very existence

and undermine the way minis-

ters behave."

On Thursday night, Mr Field

made a keynote speech to the

Social Market Foundation and

immediately re-ignited the row

over welfare policy.

He denounced Mr Brown's

flagship policy for encouraging

the unemployed back to work

the Working Families' Tax

Credit - as a system designed

to lead employers and staff

into a "spider's web of dishonesty and corruption". Ministers

were furious but simply wanted

the row to go away.

Unfortunately for his oppo-

nents, Mr Field now plans a

self-styled crusade, a "cam-

aign" as he calls it, to ensure

that the Government does not

follow Gordon Brown's path

towards greater means testing

of benefits.

More policy papers are

planned. Worse still, more re-

lations about the workings of

Government are also in the

pipeline.

The most hectic dozen days

of his life finally behind him, he

will today settle down in his

book-lined home in Hamilton

Square, in central London, to

catch up on academic papers

and magazine reviews. His

"campaign" is on hold until the

autumn. But he isn't going

away.

China praised as HK stewards

BY MARTIN HICKMAN

DEMOCRACY in Hong Kong a year after the handover to China is "seriously flawed" and needs urgent reform, a Commons committee said in a report yesterday.

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee criticised a million-plus drop in the former colony's electorate, and urged introduction of universal suffrage for legislative council elections and for the post of chief executive.

At present the legislative council did not "accurately reflect the popular will", and the chief executive was appointed by Beijing, the report said.

But the MPs praised China's overall stewardship of Hong Kong, now a Special Administration Region following the handover from Britain on July 1 last year, particularly on the right to protest.

The committee found little evidence of repression.

"While it is clear that a structure for repression of this freedom exists (some of it inherited from colonial times) it is not used," the report said.

"On the evidence we have seen, the actions of the police and the civil authorities in this area do not appear to have altered since the handover."

Under the "one country, two systems" plan, China promised to allow Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy, except in foreign affairs and defence.

Pro-democracy activists feared the Chinese authorities would immediately crack down on dissent and crush pro-democracy and other protests.

The committee singled out changes to the electoral system for the 60-seat legislative council introduced by Britain in 1995.

The number of voters in 30 seats reserved for business and professionals fell from 1,147,107 in 1995 to 138,934 in 1998 while a further 10 seats were decided by a small election committee.

"The results of two thirds of the seats in the legislative council - 40 out of 60 - are decided by fewer than 14,000 voters out of a total registered electorate of about 2.8 million," said the report.

"We believe the structure is fundamentally flawed."

The 12-member committee urged China to bring forward plans for the introduction of universal suffrage for council elections in 2008, criticising the timetable as "too distant".

It also noted a degree of self-censorship by the media, but said independent outlets had prospered and newspaper editors "did not appear constrained" by the likely official reaction to stories.

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No change in Labour's tough policy on inflation, says Byers

BY PAUL WAUGH

low inflation which would enable individuals, families and businesses to plan ahead.

The former schools minister reiterated the Chancellor's call for pay restraint for directors, saying that rising wages would hamper efforts to keep the economy on a stable footing.

A recent survey showed that boardroom pay increases are running at 18 per cent.

"All of us, starting from the boardroom outwards, must now show the responsibility that the country needs," said Mr Byers.

"It would be the worst of short-termism to pay ourselves more today at the cost of higher interest rates, fewer jobs and slower growth tomorrow."

Mr Byers told Labour party members in London that the decision to give the Bank of England power to set interest rates was vital to achieve the

Third Way is not about something trying to split the difference between the old Left and the new Right in an attempt to find a messy compromise located somewhere in the middle ground of politics.

"The values of the Third Way are those which underpin a better society - decency, fairness, liberty and self-fulfilment. With regard to the economy, our Third Way is designed to combine dynamism with equity."

Initiatives such as the New Deal to get people back to work, tax and benefit reforms, cutting corporation tax and setting clear rules for fiscal and monetary policy bore out this balanced approach, he said.

Mr Byers hit back at Tory attacks on the Government's policies, saying shadow Chancellor Peter Lilley had taken "the fifth amendment" on the Tories' proposals for interest rates.

He added: "Our approach is often termed the Third Way. It needs to be made clear that the

Government should also 'contribute to efforts' to encourage developing countries to sign up to emission reduction targets.

MPs said a vital element of the drive to cut emissions of greenhouse gases is the agreement of effective audit and enforcement arrangements under

the Kyoto Protocol. Kyoto committed developed countries to an overall 5 per cent reduction in their 1990 levels of emissions of greenhouse gases between 2008-12.

The MPs stressed that the unilateral UK target of a 20 per cent reduction for CO_{2</sub}

China
raised
is HK
stewards

MARTIN HICKMAN
EMBASSY IN Hong Kong
After the handover, a
rebuilding of Hong Kong's
economy will be a
top priority for the new
government, said a
MP yesterday.

The Labour MP, Alan Milns, told
the House of Commons yesterday:
"Hong Kong's economy has suffered
a major setback since the handover.
At present, the services
sector did not immediately
feel the impact will affect
local executives," was apparent
in Beijing, the paper said.

"But the MP, who stressed the
overall strength of the
Hong Kong Special Adminis-
tration Region, following its
handover from Britain, said
last year, particularly the
right to protest."

The committee found no

evidence of repression.

"While it is not entirely
clear for what reason, there
does not seem to be any
from colonial times. They
need to be more open," the report said.

"On the evidence we have

seen, the actions of the per-

sonalities involved in the

cases do not appear to have
been aimed at hindering"

Under the new arrangements,

the Chinese government

will allow Hong Kong to keep

its own currency, its own

central bank and its own

tax system.

The committee also found

no evidence of any

attempt by the Chinese

government to interfere

in Hong Kong's internal

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attempt by the Chinese

Smack City tries to kick the habit

IT TOOK the death of a 13-year-old boy from heroin to arouse the people of Cranhill to reclaim the housing scheme's mean stairways and corridors from the drug dealers.

The trade in heroin, amphetamines and cannabis was quite open and often backed by violence. To youngsters here, picking their way past a hollow-eyed figure injecting heroin in a tower-block corridor was commonplace.

This week's Home Office survey warning of a heroin epidemic among teenagers was no shock to Cranhill, where for years parents have warned their children not to pick up needles or "sweeties" but felt powerless to fight back.

There is little glamour in the drugs culture of Cranhill or in the place itself - a collection of 2,400 homes in council tenements, 1960s maisonettes and three tower blocks by the M8 motorway on the outskirts of Glasgow. The only obviously historic building is Bartinie

BY STEPHEN GOODWIN
Scotland Correspondent

Prison, known locally as "the big house".

As much as its neighbour Easterhouse, Cranhill fits Billy Connolly's description of "a desert w/windae". A lot of the windows though, close to where 13-year-old Allan Harper died in October, three small children and their mother perished in a fire, are boarded up.

Allan was found dead from an overdose on 3 January in one of the maisonettes; his shoulder gnawed by the three bull terriers belonging to his mother's boyfriend. He may have bought the heroin from one of the ice cream vans that ply the housing schemes (estates).

As parish priest John Gannon observed, had Allan been three years older nobody would have bothered about the death. Indeed within a fortnight there was another drugs death in Cranhill but the victim was a 34-

year old man; a run-of-the-mill case.

Allan's death first traumatised and then galvanised the families of Cranhill. Fr Gannon's message, that they were

all, in a sense, to blame for the tragedy, struck home. A candle procession attracted more than 400. Had only a few stalwarts turned out, the glimmer of hope for Cranhill would have

been extinguished. "When you live in a community where drugs are rife you tend to keep your head down," said Gail McCann, a councillor and a leading player in the newly formed Mothers Against Drugs group.

The dealers do not necessarily conform to a stereotype thug with loaded pockets. Housewives commonly deal from their homes, confident that there is little chance of being caught and virtually none of being sent to prison.

The mothers' group and Easterhouse police, who cover Cranhill, are bent on cracking that sense of invulnerability.

Neighbours along the corridors or the open balconies know who is dealing. The change since Allan's death is in the readiness to pass information to the police or perhaps warn a housewife pusher to "chuck it" or else.

Superintendent Stuart Miller, head of Greater Easterhouse police, says there has been a 10-fold increase in responses to appeals for information since the group was set up.

For their part, in the first five months of this year, the police searched 191 homes and more than 1,000 people for drugs. About 230 people were charged with offences from dealing to possession. Seizures included

£500,000 of heroin and £200,000 of amphetamine.

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For their part, in the first five months of this year, the police searched 191 homes and more than 1,000 people for drugs. About 230 people were charged with offences from dealing to possession. Seizures included

offence of possession. So the savvy dealer only carries a modest amount and contacts a mate by mobile phone for more.

Even when charged with dealing, pushers can spend months out on bail before a case is heard and often plea bargaining ends with a conviction only for possession. The mothers would like the lawyers and judges to swap homes with them for a week to get in touch with the social realities of places like Cranhill.

"They just see what's on the charge sheet," said Sandra Gilchrist, chairperson of the group. "They don't know what we have to live with."

But the mums are getting heard. In June, Scottish Office minister Henry McLeish promised to take up the women's concerns with the judges. However, it will not just be about evictions and jail sentences. The group will call for prevention services in schools, a crisis centre and long-term help to overcome drug dependency. After all, as Mrs McCann, a mother of four, is keenly aware: "It could be one of my boys this time next week."



Colin McPherson

The Link

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Farmers targeted by quadnappers

BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY
Environment Correspondent

RUSTLING has taken on a new look - thieves who once took sheep now steal the quad bikes farmers increasingly use to look after their flocks.

Gangs of quadnappers steal the machines to order, according to the agricultural insurers General Accident. The all-terrain vehicles are becoming essential for many farmers, for everything from carrying spreading equipment to inspecting fences and reaching land inaccessible to other vehicles, besides checking stock.

But their popularity has made them a target, and what General Accident calls a "staggering" one in four vehicles are stolen.

In the past five years there has been a 30-per-cent increase in theft of the bikes, worth up to £6,000 each.

"Thieves are increasingly turning to farms, where thousands of pounds worth of equipment frequently lie vulnerable," said General Accident's agriculture manager, John Kaye.



Quad bikes have become essential equipment for farmers

"Quad bikes are particularly soft targets because of the ease with which they can be loaded onto a van or trailer and then rapidly sold on."

"Nevertheless, an increasing number of thefts occur as a result of 'casualness' on the part of their owners - whether it's leaving an expensive quad bike unattended at the edge of a field near a busy road or failing to put anything more than a flimsy barn door between a thief and thousands of pounds worth of equipment."

There were few lengths to which thieves would not go, Mr Kaye said.

"In the past year or so we've seen claims for a £5,000 quad bike which was chained and padlocked in a custom-made steel cage concreted into the floor of a locked outbuilding being stolen with the aid of an acetylene blow torch, as well as thieves removing a £2,000 vehicle chain and padlocked inside a barn before pushing it across three fields in broad daylight."

BP calls the greens black

GREENPEACE has been reported by BP, Britain's biggest oil and gas producer, for causing an oil spill amounting to less than two pints.

Workers on BP's *Foxtrot* production vessel, 100 miles west of Shetland, spotted an "oil slick" shortly after the MV *Greenpeace* left the area.

A spokesman for BP, which provides 17 per cent of Britain's oil and 13 per cent of its gas, said: "The *Greenpeace* vessel sailed past in open seas outside

of the exclusion zone around our site. I don't know exactly what they were doing there, just watching us, I suppose. But when they sailed off there was a sheen on the water. We have a statutory duty to report such things to the Department of Trade and Industry."

BP

BP

BP staff took photographs and samples of the tainted water for investigation. Although the leak was small, BP stood by the decision to report it, the spokesman said.

A spokesman for Greenpeace, which has been campaigning against BP's North Atlantic production sites, said the spill was probably caused by rain washing oil off the decks.

He said the authorities considered the incident insignificant and took no action. "The report to the Marine Pollution Control Unit indicated that less than a litre was seen."

Carey apologises to Christian gays

THE ARCHBISHOP of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, yesterday apologised to lesbian and gay Christians for the pain they have experienced as a result of the Lambeth Conference of bishops' hardline resolution on homosexuality and underlined his commitment to dialogue.

In his first and only appearance to the media during the conference, Dr Carey, president of the worldwide Anglican Communion, attempted to appease liberal Anglicans by stressing that lesbian and gay Christians

BY CLARE GARNER

are "full members of the Body of Christ".

"On human sexuality, we have been quite open in acknowledging our differences," he said. "We have worked hard and the result, while restating a traditional position on homosexual practice, clearly includes homosexual people in the Church. We have clearly stated that all baptised people are full members of the Body of Christ, and we specifically in-

cluded the commitment to continue to listen to the experience of gay and lesbian Christians.

"I am sad that our resolution has caused them such pain. I can only try to reassure them of my commitment to continue to listen, and to try to understand more of their experience of the Church, and I invite them to continue the journey with us, however painful, and I ask them to listen to the voice of the Church as much as the rest of us must listen to them."

Dr Carey's reassurance

came at the end of three weeks of bitter disagreement between the alliance of evangelical bishops and those from Africa and Asia who reject homosexuals as sinners, and liberal bishops, particularly from the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Bishops from the latter countries, where practising homosexuals are knowingly ordained, wanted the Church to relax its attitude to gays by sanctioning the blessing of same-sex unions and officially

accepting the ordination of practising gays.

Dr Carey, who himself adopts a traditional stance on homosexuality, stunned delegates during the conference when he turned up at a drinks party hosted by the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement. He defended the idea that there could be dialogue despite the strongly-worded statement which even did away with word "chastity" because it might be open to misinterpretation. Instead the word "abstinence" ap-

peared as an alternative to marriage in the final resolution.

"The thrust of dialogue does not assume we begin from a place of wishy-washiness," he said.

The resolution passed on Wednesday comes down firmly in favour of a literal interpretation of Scripture on matters of homosexuality. It was Dr Carey said a "defining moment". However, he added: "I don't rule out where the debate will take us. I know, as someone rooted in Scripture, that I am much more comfortable with

the text of the resolution we passed (as opposed to earlier, more liberal texts)."

The Bishop of Edinburgh, the Right Rev Richard Holloway, yesterday apologised for a public attack the previous day on Dr Carey's contribution to the homosexuality debate. He had defended it as "pathetic", little more than "a nice fluffy epilogue". And when asked about the quality of Dr Carey's leadership preceding the vote, he had asked: "What leadership?"

Bishop Holloway yesterday Marriage made in heaven? Review, page 8

TV exploits animals' pain, says Morris

BY KATE WATSON-SMITH

ONE MIGHT have thought that Johnny Morris would consider it animal magic. But as yet another "pet tv" programme hits our screens, the doyen of animal programmes has accused television producers of exploiting sick animals for the sake of ratings.

His complaint followed news that former *Blue Peter* presenters John Noakes and Peter Purves are to front two more new shows about pets. Next week, viewers can choose from 14 programmes on the welfare of furry or scaly friends, ranging from tales of rescuing Spot from a roof to what happened to Snowy the hamster when he ate slug pellets.

It may be true that the British are obsessed with their animals but Mr Morris, the presenter of the much-loved *Animal Magic*, believes it has all gone too far: "It is enough to make you vomit. I never look at those programmes, I have seen



Purves: Ex-'Blue Peter' presenter to front new show

a sample of them and that was enough for me," he said.

"They are purely sentimental, money-making things which provide vehicles for people to watch animals who have suffered and are in distress, or have been abandoned. People make entertainment out of it."

"They show some doe-eyed spaniel with a broken leg, and what could be more touching than that, but it is a disgraceful way to entertain people."

Mr Morris, who began *Animal Magic* in 1982, said his programme never exploited a sick animal. To turn this into entertainment, he said, "makes my head spin", adding: "There are a lot of people who love to watch it and shed a tear but it is not my idea of the way television should be used."

But the fascination of commissioning editors with sick animals shows no sign of slowing. Mr Noakes's show, *Mad Dog*



Johnny Morris, the animal expert, and his cat. He believes television is exploiting animals to up ratings

Mission sets sail to solve the riddle of missing trawler

BY PAUL LASHMAR

ONE OF the great British sea mysteries - what happened to the Hull trawler, the *Gaul* - may be answered this week. *Marsail 18*, a purpose-built survey ship hired by the British government to examine the wreck of the trawler, sets sail this afternoon from Kristiansund, in Norway.

It should be in position over the wreck of the sunken trawler by Monday afternoon. *Marsail 18* carries extensive underwater survey equipment and cameras and should be able to provide vital clues as to why the *Gaul* sank.

In the intervening 24 years, speculation has mounted as to the cause of the sinking. Why did one of the newest, largest and safest trawlers in the fleet suddenly sink without even sending a distress signal?

Since the *Gaul* vanished, there have been allegations

that the trawler was engaged in Cold War spying for British Intelligence. In 1974, Labour Defence Minister Bill Rogers wrote: "I can assure you that the British trawler fleet is not involved in any way in intelligence gathering."

Twenty years on, Lord Rogers now admits that he was "misled" by officials after television programmes showed that Naval Intelligence regularly used trawlers and their crews to spy on the movement of Soviet ships and submarines out of the key northern naval port of Murmansk. Nellist was skipper of the *Gaul*.

Last December, the Ministry of Defence admitted that Hull trawlers were hired to conduct special missions. The MOD, however, insists these operations stopped in 1973, a year before the sinking.

This week, Hull skipper Jack Lilley said he was recruited by the secret intelligence service to take photographs of a submarine base while he was in Russia at a fishing exhibition. He revealed the man who helped, by keeping Russian officials occupied while he took the photographs, was Peter Nellist. Nellist was skipper of the *Gaul*.

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and also what it stands for; style, taste and unburnt special moments in good company. You could be one of two lucky winners for a weekend in Edinburgh to join those fringe dwellers who will be invading the festival from the 9th August. The prizes will include travel, two nights accommodation (Friday and Saturday) returning on Sunday evening plus a pair of tickets to three comedy shows at the Calder's Gilded Balloon. Five runners up will also receive a case of Calder's Cream Ale.

All you have to do to enter this competition is to dial the number below, answer the following question on line and leave your name and full address and contact number:

Q: When will fringe dwellers be invading Edinburgh?

1) August 7 2) August 8 3) August 9

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Call cost 50 p per minute and should not be longer than two minutes. Winners will be picked at random after the lines close at midnight on Sunday 9th August 1998. Usual independent rules apply. Editor: decision a first.

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Rescuers scrabbled at mountains

Blast wrecks six buses and college offices

BY MATTHEW BIGG
in Nairobi

FIRST A loud bang and then a thick plume of smoke rose hundreds of feet into the air. After a moment of silence, glass and masonry rained down from the sky.

This was the scene in central Nairobi yesterday as a huge car bomb aimed at the United States embassy ripped through the morning rush hour.

Two buildings caught the full force of the blast - the US embassy and, behind it, Ufundi Co-op House, which contains a secretarial college and offices.

Ufundi House collapsed, floor by floor, crushing its occupants. The embassy's reinforced, five-storey structure survived but its rear-facing rooms were reduced to blackened shells.

Minutes later office workers, cut by glass, were streaming away from the area of the blast and a trail of blood led back to the US embassy.

In Kenya politics and civil disturbance often go hand in hand, but the shock visible on the faces of office workers staggering away from the blast signalled violence of a different order. Six buses, gutted by the blast, had halted on Haile Selassie Avenue. The driver of one had been thrown dead, halfway through his shattered window.

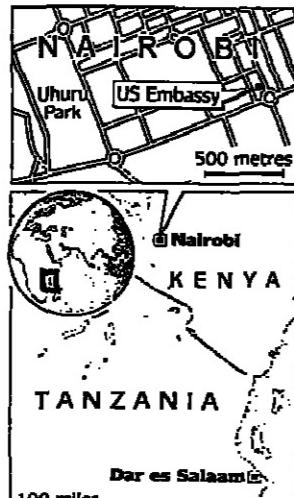
At the rear of the embassy rescue workers started to stack the remains of around 15 people who had caught the full force of the explosion.

One charred and blackened body looked more like a series of logs removed from a fire than a middle-aged female.

Some lacked faces or limbs or clothes. Others seemed to have swollen.

The bodies were stacked haphazardly on to the backs of trucks and carted away.

"I have seen eight dead white people being pulled out of the US embassy and 25 other



corpses [from Ufundi house]," said Amir Hassam, a rescue worker with the Aga Khan Social Welfare Board.

Eda Rubin, a management consultant, was walking near the embassy when the blast happened. "I heard a loud bang then the whole place was shaking and within a split second glass was falling on my head."

Simon Tafei, a messenger, said: "It was strange ... a big bang and then I was lying on the floor. All around me were people, bleeding."

The rescue effort began within minutes. As US embassy personnel pulled out casualties and tried to compile a list of their missing, hundreds of volunteers swarmed over Ufundi House.

Mounted police, riot police, firemen in heat-protective suits, workers from the Red Cross, the Kenya Wildlife Service and aid agencies, business people and passers-by all threw themselves into the effort.

At first there was one survivor for every corpse pulled from the rubble. One US marine carried the body of an employee out of the embassy basement. Minutes later a cheer went up as a man was



An injured employee of the US embassy in Nairobi being helped from the wrecked building after the car-bomb blast yesterday morning

Antony Njuguna/Reuters

pulled from a hole in the fourth floor of Ufundi House.

He was strapped to a stretcher and manhandled down two long ladders to a waiting ambulance and still had the strength to raise his head and shout, "God is great. God is great," he yelled, his arms held out in a gesture of victory after having been trapped for more than three hours.

But the early successes could not dispel the grim fact that no survivors were being pulled from the lower floors of Ufundi House.

More than 500 of the casu-

ties were taken to Nairobi's Kenyatta National Hospital, which made an urgent appeal for blood donors and volunteer medical workers. Dozens of general practitioners, retired nurses and foreign aid workers

converged on the hospital to help.

President Daniel Arap Moi arrived at the hospital in the afternoon to visit some of the injured.

"The response has been fantastic," said Julius Meme, Kenya's director of medical services. "People have been donating blood, blankets, everything."

A woman awaiting treat-

ment cuts on her face and arms said: "I heard a big sound and went to check what was happening at the door. But when I got there I was thrown to the floor."

"I reached the street and ran with the others. I saw I was bleeding from my head, my hands, everywhere."

Scores of others in blood-soaked clothes, their faces soaked with lacerations, sat

dazed waiting their turn for treatment amid the chaos. In corridors, reception areas and in the open air, nurses and volunteers stitched and bandaged the wounded.

Mr Moi issued a statement condemning the attack and said the authorities would do anything possible "to bring the perpetrators of the heinous crime to book".

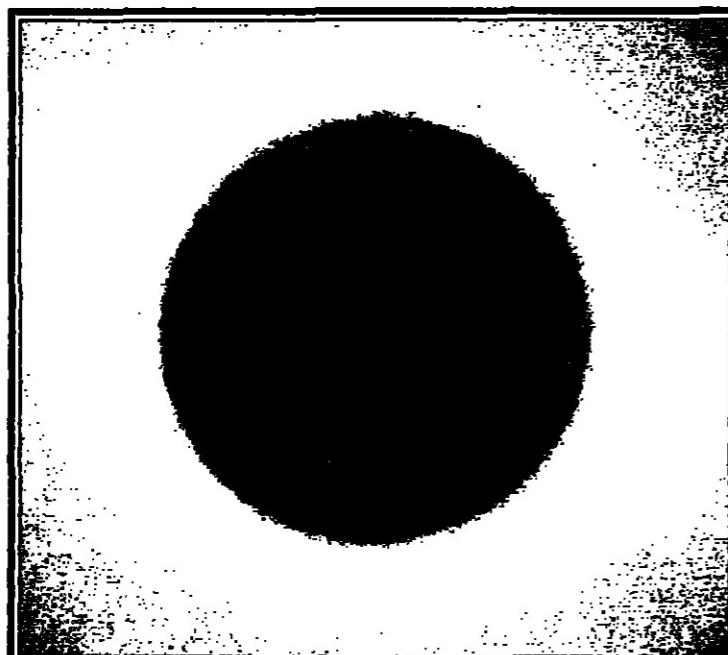
Kenya has rarely been the

scene of urban violence of this sort.

In 1979 the Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi was flattened by an explosion which killed several tourists. A shadowy Arab group claimed responsibility, saying it was in retaliation for Kenya allowing Israeli troops to refuel in Nairobi during their raid on Uganda's Entebbe airport to rescue hostages from a hijacked airplane.

THIS WEEK IN THE SEVEN-SECTION

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



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Albright flies back from Rome to deal with crisis

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT, the US Secretary of State, who flew back to Washington urgently yesterday to address the crisis in the aftermath of the Africa bombings, had been in Rome on what was described as a "personal visit".

One, if not the main, purpose of that visit was to attend today's wedding at a castle near Rome of her department's chief spokesman, James Rubin, 38, and CNN's star foreign correspondent, Christiane Amanpour, 40.

The wedding is the culmination of a romance that

began last autumn in Bosnia, where Ms Amanpour was on a reporting assignment.

It has been conducted in cities around the world, depending on the pair's professional responsibilities and international airline schedules.

The timing was a calculated gamble that the international scene would be quiet and neither would be urgently required elsewhere.

Ms Albright - who has taken a benevolent interest

in Mr Rubin's progress since he was her youthful spokesman at the United Nations - was one of a number of prominent guests, who included the head of the CNN television network, Ted Turner.

In the past week Washington gossip columns had speculated idly about what would happen if war broke out with Iraq or some other international crisis erupted on the eve of the wedding.

The bad news - for their respective organisations - is that it will go ahead.

The good news is that the honeymoon destination is ... Africa.



Madeleine Albright: Cut short her visit to Rome

Low security made target embassies a 'soft option'

THE United States has some of the most secure and well protected embassies in the world.

Following a series of terrorist attacks in the Seventies, the Americans have been upgrading their 162 embassies. The need to provide extra protection is illustrated by the fact that about a third of all attacks involving terrorists in the past year have been against American citizens or buildings.

Until now, the overseas headquarters at the Tanzanian capital in Dar es Salaam and in Nairobi, Kenya, had not been considered likely targets.

An expert on terrorism yesterday suggested that bombers, possibly from the Middle East, may have chosen the two compounds because they were considered a "soft option".

All US embassies have elaborate and extensive security arrangements ranging from bomb-proof walls and underground bunkers to hi-tech pass systems and Marine guards.

During the past two decades,

the compound, and armed guards are posted on all the entrances. To gain access to the embassies there is a complex system of passes and barriers. No one is allowed to drive directly into the staff car-park, a measure designed to ensure that a suicide bomber is not given a free run.

A special protection area, in which staff vital records and equipment can be shielded, is usually constructed at the heart of the embassy. These self-contained zones have extra protection from bomb blasts.

US embassies have five levels of security alert from one to five - from low risk to high. A protection unit at the US State Department also trains staff in anti-terrorist procedures.

These measures are in addition to the security provided by the host country, which can vary from excellent to almost non-existent.

Steel-reinforced bollards were installed in the US embassy in London in February

following fears of car-bomb attacks by Middle Eastern terrorists.

Professor Paul Wilkinson, chairman at the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at St Andrews's University, believes the relative low-security status of Kenya and Tanzania may have made it a prime target for Middle Eastern terrorists looking for an easy hit.

"Neither Dar es Salaam nor Nairobi were considered to be in an area of high threat, and are therefore unlikely to have the more elaborate security measures."

"The terrorists may have taken the least risk rather than going for a highly protected and fortified building."

But, he added: "American security experts and diplomats are well aware that all these physical protections are only part of the story. There's no guarantee that they will work against well-coordinated and equipped terrorists."

JULY 1998

of broken and twisted concrete



Bomb damage in Nairobi yesterday; 80 people were feared killed in two blasts at US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania

BY ANDREW MARSHALL
in Washington

IN THE aftermath of yesterday's bombs in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, the word "terrorism" was being liberally used in Washington.

To many Americans the message from the media will have been clear: this was another episode in the decades-long confrontation with a shadowy international Muslim terrorist conspiracy.

But the lessons of two recent incidents argued against a rush to judgement: The Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 was pinned on Islam before the dust had even settled, yet the culprits turned out to be American white and Christian. And the downing of TWA flight 800 three years ago - still not explained - seems more likely to have been the result of a mechanical malfunction than some sinister Middle East cabal.

There seems little doubt that yesterday's attacks were carefully co-ordinated. But the word "terrorism" is not particularly useful in understanding either motives or culpability. It implies a meaningless malice, a randomness of method and target that is usually belied by the evidence.

Most of the attacks against US targets overseas have a logic that is clear to the attackers and usually to the attacked.

Anyone who goes to the trouble of putting together several large car bombs and detonating them at the same time in two adjacent countries has a message and wants to be understood very clearly. They see themselves as being involved in a military conflict.

The motives for attacking two American embassies in Africa may be numerous, but the fact that two attacks of considerable power were launched virtually simultaneously points to a well-organised group with some experience and an infrastructure of communications and people.

The targets chosen were relatively soft. Though all US embassies mount security pre-

cautions against attack, it is unlikely that the embassies in Nairobi or Dar es Salaam would have erected the kind of physical barriers found in, say, Beirut.

Whoever carried out the attacks did not choose to target the much better-protected US facilities around the world, such as those in Europe or the Middle East.

It is possible, but unlikely, that the choice of target was dictated by a desire to strike back against US policy in the region itself. The US is regarded in Africa as having played a key role in the conflicts in Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire, and both Tanzania and Kenya house refugees and expatriates from these countries. But there is no indication that there is any organised group with the intention or capability for this kind of attack.

More likely is that the attacks reflect a desire to strike back against the US for its policy elsewhere. The attacks coincided with another confrontation with Iraq over UN monitoring of its weapons of mass destruction, but there has been no indication that Iraq has attempted anything like an attack on US facilities.

US relations with Iran - to which the US government would usually point the finger after an episode like this - are relatively warm.

None of this means that the US does not have enemies, of course. The State Department pointed to two recent warnings, both of which threatened action against US targets overseas. Earlier this week, an Egyptian group calling itself Jihad threatened to retaliate for American assistance in extraditing Islamists to Cairo from Albania.

Ayman el-Zawahri, leader of

Jihad, is believed to be in

Afghanistan with Osama Bin Laden, the radical Muslim leader who has emerged as one

of the most influential leaders of Islamic groups opposed to the US. He had told a press conference in May that American targets would be attacked, and that both civilians and the military were targets.

Mr Bin Laden is accused of being involved in the June 1996 attack on the Khobar Towers US military complex near Dhahran in Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden has frequently warned America that unless it withdrew from the Gulf, he would attack US military targets.

There have been other

warnings to the US this year. In February, during the last con-

frontation between the US and Iraq, a group calling itself the International Islamic Front

warned it would strike at Ameri-

cian targets if the US attacked

Baghdad.

The statement was signed by

Bin Laden and el-Zawahri, among others. London-based newspaper *Al-Hayat* said that the IIF - which also included Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups - was a newly formed alliance, welded together by Bin Laden.

At the same time, there have also been a series of high-profile extraditions of alleged Islamist radicals, part of a co-ordinated attack by Arab and Western governments on groups that they believe are trying to unseat and destabilise governments throughout the Middle East.

In June, Saeed Sayyid Salama, an Egyptian national who was reported to be an adviser to Mr Bin Laden, was extradited to Egypt, and Syria extradited 16 men to Algeria. These were said to follow an extradition pact between 22 Arab countries signed in April.

Though this was not directly connected to the US, there has been help from America for extraditions of alleged Islamist radicals in the past. Many of the governments concerned - Saudi Arabia and Egypt in particular - are key US allies in the Middle East.

Scores killed and hurt in Dar es Salaam bombing

BY WAMBUI CHEGE
in Dar es Salaam
AND NICK GORDON

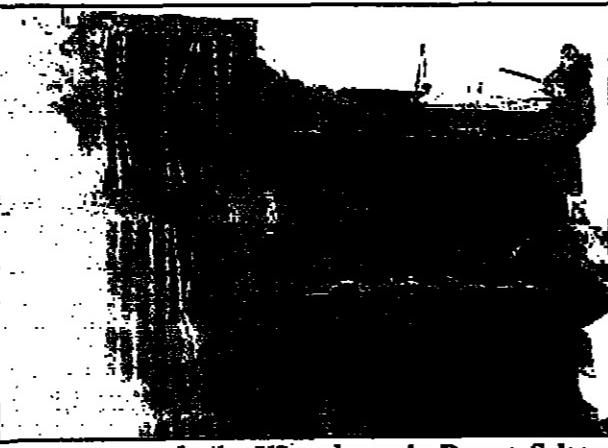
A CAR bomb at the United States embassy in Tanzania turned part of Dar es Salaam's diplomatic quarter into a chaos of flame, smoke and rubble yesterday. Initial reports from an embassy spokesman said six people were killed and 58 injured.

The explosion rocked the embassy around 10.45am, destroying the entrance of the complex, setting several cars ablaze and toppling trees.

The scene looked like "a war zone", one witness said.

Shocked US Marine embassy guards rushed to help evacuate the building and then pistols in hand, cordoned off the area. A Tanzanian security officer at the embassy, Daniel Edson, said everyone was taken by surprise. "There was nothing unusual before the explosion," he said.

"I was in the visa section," said Amio Zara from her hos-



Smoke surrounds the US embassy in Dar es Salaam yesterday after the blast from a suspected car bomb AP

pital bed, where she was being treated for head, hand and leg injuries suffered in the blast.

"I heard a loud bang outside and immediately felt pain in my head. I tried to run downstairs but the stairs had collapsed. I managed to get outside. I saw smoke and fallen trees before I collapsed," she added.

Fifteen of the wounded were

kept in hospital for treatment.

The French and German embassies, both nearby, were damaged by the explosion but no one in either building was hurt.

Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa condemned the attack.

"Horrible and despicable," he said to reporters on arrival at the town of Victoria Falls in

Zimbabwe, where he is due to join six other African leaders for a summit on the Congo crisis.

"We are going to try to unearth who is behind this ... When we do, we are going to take very stern measures indeed," he said.

"Attacks like this have never happened here before," said Richard Mngaza, deputy editor of Tanzania's *Daily Mail*. "Nairobi, yes. Mogadishu, yes. Cairo, yes, but Dar? Never."

"So when the explosion went off we thought it was an earthquake. Our office is maybe eight kilometres from the embassy. We could hear and feel the blast from here, it was that loud and powerful. But no one here thought of bombs or terrorism. We just don't have terrorists here."

So unprepared is Tanzania for this sort of event that the city fire brigade could not send any of its vehicles to the scene. Instead, one fire engine from the port, two from the airport and another from the army were summoned.

Unprepared is Tanzania for this sort of event that the city fire brigade could not send any of its vehicles to the scene. Instead, one fire engine from the port, two from the airport and another from the army were summoned.

Grisly history of terror gangs who target the US

BY KATHERINE BUTLER

NOT SINCE Pan Am flight No 103 exploded over Lockerbie in December 1988 killing 270 people have anti-US terrorists targeted their victims so spectacularly.

Yesterday's embassy bombings abruptly ended an 18-month period of relative quiet which may have lulled US security services into complacency.

The number of American casualties from international terrorism last year fell to one, the lowest levels in 25 years. I decline attributed by the US state department to its law enforcement agencies in tracking those responsible.

Nine states are on the Amer-

ican government's list of "terrorist sponsors", although Iran remains the "most active" backer of Islamic extremist attacks despite the more conciliatory posture of Iranian president Mohammed Khatami who came to power a year ago.

The last big incident was in June 1996 when a US military housing complex in Saudi Arabia was blown up, killing 19 American airmen and wounding 500.

An exiled Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, described as one of the world's most dangerous terrorists, is wanted both for the Khobar Towers bar-

racks bombing and a car bombing in the Saudi capital Riyadh the previous year which killed five Americans.

Mr bin Laden, believed to be based in Afghanistan, is suspected of funding the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York in 1996. The massive explosion killed six and injured 1,000. Four people were convicted of the WTC bombing, including the Muslim cleric Umar Abd al-Rahman, an Egyptian national, and Ramzi Ahmed Yousef who had been extradited from Pakistan.

The last time an American embassy was targeted so directly was in September 1984 when a suicide bomber pre-

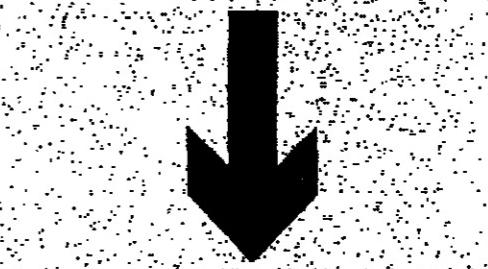
sumed to be from Islamic Jihad blew up the US embassy in East Beirut, killing 40 and wounding dozens. Another suspected Islamic terrorist, Mir Aimal Khan, is facing trial for the murders of two CIA officials in January 1993 at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

In March 1995 two US consular employees were killed in Karachi when their shuttle bus was attacked and in February 1996 a Palestinian gunman killed one tourist and wounded 12 others at the Empire State building in New York before shooting himself.

A note he carried said the attack was punishment for "the enemies of Palestine".

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Lewinsky's story takes second place

FOR THE first time in a frenetic two weeks, the Monica Lewinsky sex-and-lies affair took second billing in Washington yesterday, following early-morning news of the car bombs in Kenya and Tanzania. For the White House, and for the US media, the pictures of raw violence and mayhem, and the resurgence of international terrorism, however shocking, brought a return to familiar news values and a respite from a subject that was not only embarrassing but politically dangerous.

After Ms Lewinsky's eight hours of testimony before the grand jury on Thursday, the affair was reduced to the one essential question that politicians have feared: what is sex? According to anonymous, but consistent, leaks, Ms Lewinsky had admitted, as expected, that she had a sexual relationship with the President of the United States.

It was, the reports said delicately, a "sexual relationship of a certain kind". She reportedly said that there had been at least a dozen sexual encounters with the President in the White House over a period of 18 months, starting in November 1993.

This was a time when the business of government was shut down because the Re-

BY MARY DEJEVSKY
in Washington

publican-majority Congress was refusing to pass the budget bill. This meant that there was no money to pay government employees, and most were not at their desks.

At that time, as Mr Clinton testified in the Paula Jones sexual harassment suit, "interns", mostly unpaid trainees, of whom the then 22-year-old Monica Lewinsky was one, were filling in for absent staff and enjoyed unusual access throughout the White House.

Trainees, as many members of staff have testified, were usually kept well away from the Oval Office and the presidential quarters.

In evidence which appears to fit completely with what she told her then friend and colleague, Linda Tripp - accounts that Ms Tripp secretly taped - Ms Lewinsky apparently told the grand jury that the type of sex she had with Mr Clinton was such that in his view it would not constitute "sexual relations". In the tapes, she boasted to Ms Tripp of repeatedly performing oral sex on the President. She also spoke about "phone sex", and one of the books reportedly in her possession and bought at that time concerned "phone sex".

"Contact", the definition went on for good measure, "means intentional touching, either di-

rectly or through clothing". If such contact did take place, Mr Clinton could be open to a perjury charge. The gravity of such a charge, some legal experts have suggested, is less if it relates to evidence in a civil case than in a criminal case, but others disagree, arguing that perjury is perjury, and the basis of the judicial system.

The consolation for the White House was that Ms

Lewinsky did not, apparently, implicate the President in a cover-up. They discussed ways to conceal their affair; she said, but he did not tell her to lie about it under oath. That would seem to absolve Mr Clinton from a charge of "suborning perjury".

On Thursday night, as details of Ms Lewinsky's testimony seeped out, the centrality of the "what is sex?" question was already putting the White House

and American media organisations in a quandary. The White House was simply silent; a silence that was successfully replaced yesterday in expressions of horror and regret over the casualties in Africa.

For the media, it was another matter. Earlier in the week, network news organisations had adopted different solutions about how to treat Ms Lewinsky's reportedly "semen-

stained" dress to make for family-friendly viewing. A dress with "physical evidence of a sexual relationship" was one favoured formulation; "stained with bodily fluids", or "DNA" was another.

A leaked and unconfirmed report that FBI tests had proved not only the presence of "DNA", but also a "match", was the subject of an internal memo at NBC news that kept

that aspect off the air. For almost all US news outlets, however, a young woman's sworn testimony that she had repeated sexual encounters with the President of the United States at the White House was strong and risky material that only the Fox news channel chose to discuss in any detail.

For the first time in days, the stand-off with Iraq made its way up the headlines.



President Bill Clinton at the White House yesterday; he condemned the US embassy bombings as 'abhorrent'

Rick Wilking/Reuters

Rwanda threatens Congo on eve of talks to discuss border conflict

HOURS BEFORE a summit including Congo President Laurent Kabila, Rwanda's leader yesterday threatened his country would "hit back" if neighbouring Congo attacked its forces.

President Pasteur Bizimungu of Rwanda and Mr Kabila arrived in Zimbabwe for a hastily arranged meeting of

regional leaders. The fighting appears to threaten the spirit of peace that rose after apartheid's end in South Africa in 1994. As ouster of the corrupt Mobutu, Mr Kabila raised hopes for Congo's future. And after 20 years of civil war, Angola's warring factions had appeared to be ready to carry out a 1994 peace accord.

The resurgence of conflict in Congo, and the prospect of renewed civil war in neighbouring Angola, has alarmed

regional leaders. The fighting appears to threaten the spirit of peace that rose after apartheid's end in South Africa in 1994. As ouster of the corrupt Mobutu, Mr Kabila raised hopes for Congo's future. And after 20 years of civil war, Angola's warring factions had appeared to be ready to carry out a 1994 peace accord.

At a news conference in Lusaka, Zambia, on his way to Victoria Falls, Mr Bizimungu demanded that Mr Kabila justify his allegation that Rwanda was involved in the fighting.

"I understand that [Kabila] has declared war by arming 10 million people, so if we hit back," Mr Bizimungu said.

He said the leaders at the Victoria Falls summit would ask Mr Kabila to explain the current situation in his country and how the region could help.

Earlier yesterday, the Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe, ruled out military confrontation as a solution to the conflict in Congo.

Mr Mugabe said he "hopes

the conflict does not escalate and cause political turmoil to the whole of the Southern African region and scare away investors".

The President added that he was confident the conflict would be resolved by the leaders, who planned to meet all day today.

President Ben Mkapa of

Tanzania, Sam Nujoma of Namibia and Frédéric Chiluwa of Zambia also arrived yesterday.

Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni was also due to arrive.

Noticeably absent was the South African President, Nelson Mandela. It was not clear whether he had been invited.

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Stoic watchmen 'live or die' with Yangtze

BY TERESA POOLE
at Wujiu dyke, China

DRIVING NORTH along the top of the Wujiu Dyke towards the city of Wuhan, the waters of the swollen Yangtze lapped greedily at what could be seen of the muddy left-hand bank. Much lower on the other side, at the bottom of the grassy right-hand flank of the dyke, were the front-line anti-flood look-outs.

Every 120 feet or so, mile after mile, a man on a chair sits under an umbrella, facing the dyke, watching for leaks.

"We sit and watch in case some water comes through," said a 37-year-old farmer, Xu Guamin, working a 12-hour shift. In the 38°C sunshine, it seemed strangely peaceful, perhaps because of the large number of umbrellas sporting the "Wall's" logo.

"To live or die with the dykes," said one of the banners along the embankment. Did Mr Xu not feel nervous with the height of the Yangtze more than 20 feet above him just over the other side of the dyke? "Generally we are not afraid," he said. "So far it is okay."

With the middle reaches of the Yangtze in Hubei province notching up new height records yesterday, the flood fight is increasingly becoming a matter of life and death. The flood season's fourth crest is due to reach Wuhan this weekend.

About 120 miles upstream from Wuhan, near Shashi city, a dyke collapsed early yesterday, flooding about 50,000 people out of their homes, according to Hubei radio. A further five small dykes in the region were destroyed on purpose in order to relieve pressure on the main river.

Water levels at Shashi rose so high that a massive evacuation of more than 300,000 people by last night was separately under way as China's central government pondered whether it would be necessary to break



Residents of Jiujiang city fleeing yesterday after flood defences collapsed. Reuters

a major dyke today to divert the rising floodwaters from the most vulnerable parts of the Jingjiang section of the Yangtze river embankment.

Details of the collapsing dykes remain difficult to come by. On the Wujiu dyke yesterday, one taxi was bringing a family of four from Paizhou, the site of last Saturday's dyke collapse.

The Chinese government said last week just 12 people had died in the breach. Lao Yimin, a 52-year-old retired man, who lost his house in Paizhou, said: "Soldiers were going towards the dyke. The water just washed them away. I think maybe 300 to 400 were dead in the villages. As for soldiers, possibly more." He said he knew villagers who had died.

In the villages and towns along the Wujiu Dyke, it is impossible to tell from reality. "The old and the kids could not escape quickly enough," said one man. "Paizhou could not manage all the cremations so some of the corpses were sent to another cremation place," said another.

It does seem to be fact that

some TV footage shot in Paizhou by the local channel was deemed too awful to show.

About 12 miles north of Paizhou, the residents of Jinshui were getting on with life as best they could. Along the main street, life seemed almost normal until one gazed out at the vast lake which the Yangtze had become at this point. Wang Li, 32, pointed to the roof of her house, the few rows of red tiles being all one could see. "I am living in a temporary home," she said.

A five-minute journey by rowing boat brought one to a small sandbank sticking out from the water, about 20ft by 15ft. For more than a month, two families have been camping on this mound, their makeshift beds and cooking pots protected from sun and rain by a poorly mounted piece of plastic awning. A group of chickens ran about on the small island. "It is uncomfortable and inconvenient, but we have to manage it," she said.

Many of Ms Wang's family belongings were still in the submerged house. "When the

water came higher and higher, we moved our furniture and things to higher places in the house but then could not do this any more. We left the things that were durable in the water and moved the clothes," said Ms Wang. Next door to her makeshift tent home, a row of two-storey houses are half submerged so that boats now pull up at first floor balconies.

Further towards Wuhan was the town of Jinkou. At one point here, the Yangtze level sits just 12 inches below the top of a new wall of sandbags. A small stream of water seeped up through the road. Mr Xia, 30, was manning the watch post by this vulnerable section. "The water is still continuing to rise. The crest should come on Saturday," he said. Will it overflow?

"No," he promised. He has been watching this section since it was built three weeks ago.

In Wuhan, a city of 7 million about 20 miles up the dyke, a plaque in the river marks the high point of floods of 1954. Just 18 inches lower, the water level is still rising.

The Anglo-Saxon twins part company

THE CBI survey, which was published last week, confirms that the UK has now embarked on a familiar end-of-cycle experience. The virtuous circle of the last few years - which has involved rising GDP growth, capital inflows, higher equity prices, a rising exchange rate and subdued domestic inflation - has clearly come to an end. Base rates should now have peaked, and the Bank may soon need to contemplate cuts as the economy slows.

This disappointing awakening, following several years of misplaced optimism about the underlying behaviour of the economy, immediately raises the far more significant question for the world economy of whether the US might be about to suffer a similar disenchantment. Several points of comparison are relevant here.

First, there has been surprisingly little evidence that the underlying supply side behaviour of the US economy has been superior to that of the UK during the 1990s. Although the growth in productivity in the manufacturing sector has been much higher in the US over the past three years - which is very unusual - this is probably because the growth in both US manufacturing output and productivity has been severely understated by the official British statisticians. For the economy as a whole, which is obviously more important than the manufacturing sector, there has been no sign of any significant divergence in



GAVYN DAVIES

There has been greater fiscal and monetary tightening in UK, and a rising real exchange rate

productivity performance between the two economies.

Essentially, both have recorded overall productivity growth of around 1.5 per cent per annum since 1995. There is no sign here of an underlying supply-side miracle in either economy.

Second, there is the question of the growth rate in real fixed investment, which has been very substantially higher in the US than in the UK in recent years.

The cumulative growth rate in real fixed investment in the US over the past four years has been almost 40 per cent, as compared to under 20 per cent in the UK. This may to some extent explain the superior productivity performance in the US

manufacturing sector. However, there are a couple of offsetting points to bear in mind.

First, the path for real investment in the UK has probably been underestimated as a result of an overstatement in the price deflator for investment goods in Britain.

Second, and somewhat surprisingly, there is no evidence from the behaviour of capacity utilisation that the UK manufacturing sector has been operating at higher levels of capacity than its American counterpart. In fact, both US and UK manufacturing sectors have been working moderately above their normal capacity utilisation continuously over the past five years.

A third element of supply side performance concerns the structural level of unemployment, or NAIRU, in the labour market. Goldman Sachs economists estimate that the NAIRU in America may have dropped from around 7 per cent of the labour force in the late 1980s to around 5.5 per cent now. In the UK, it is more difficult to derive precise estimates for the NAIRU, but a sensible guess is that there has been a similar drop, from around 10 per cent of the labour force in the late 1980s to around 8 per cent today.

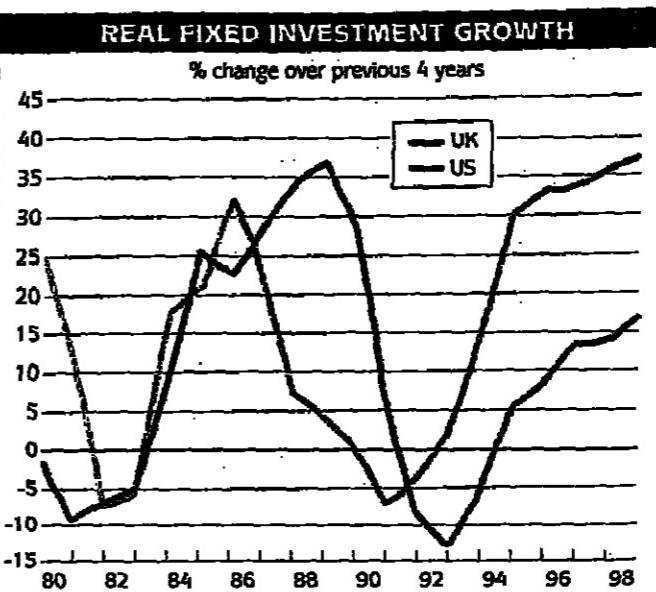
Overall, it appears therefore that there is relatively little evidence to suggest that the underlying supply side performance of the US economy has improved sharply relative to that of the UK in recent years. This, in turn, suggests that the US economy may be no better protected

from the adverse effects of a strong cyclical upswing than the UK economy has been. What, then, does account for the difference between the two economies?

The main factor is that the intensity of the cyclical upswing has been greater in the UK than in the US, so that resources have been under greater strain. UK GDP relative to trend has risen from a negative output gap of around 3 per cent in 1993 to a positive output gap (allowing for likely data revisions) of perhaps 1.5 per cent now. Therefore the upswing in the cycle, relative to trend, has been of the order of 4.5 per cent of GDP.

In the US, the upswing has been less intense, with the output gap rising from around -3 per cent in 1992 to about plus 1 per cent now, marking a swing of 3 per cent in total. Thus, while the current levels of the output gaps in the two countries are broadly comparable, the change in the output gap in the US has been much the greater.

In addition, the UK unemployment rate has dropped by almost 6 percentage points in the course of the recent upswing, while in the United States the decline in unemployment has been half as large, at around 3 per cent. This difference has been clearly reflected in the behaviour of both earnings and prices. In the UK, private sector earnings have accelerated by around 3 percentage points over the last two years, while the equivalent acceleration in the US has been only



around 1 percentage point.

Similarly, the underlying rate of consumer price inflation in the UK has continued to run in the region of 3 per cent over the past two years, while in the US the same measure of inflation has fallen from around 3 per cent to about 2.25 per cent over the same period.

As inflation pressure has emerged, there has been a much greater fiscal and monetary tightening in Britain than in America, and a much larger rise in the real exchange rate. For example, the Goldman Sachs monetary conditions indicator for the UK has tight-

ened by around 400 basis points in

the past two years, compared to a tightening of around 150bp in the US. Meanwhile, the fiscal impulse in Britain has swung towards tightening by around 5 per cent of GDP as compared to a swing of only about 1.5 per cent in the US. Finally, the effective exchange rate has been much more overvalued, relative to equilibrium, in Britain than in America.

Based on these comparisons, I conclude the following. First, the underlying supply side behaviour of the two economies has been surprisingly similar.

Second, the UK has been subject to a more intense demand-led upswing than the US.

Third, this has led to greater inflation pressure in the UK, both in the labour market and in the consumer price index.

Fourth, in response to this worsening in inflation, there has been a much greater policy tightening in the UK.

Fifth, it is this clash between worsening inflation pressures and much tighter macro-economic policy which has led to the end of the cyclical upswing in Britain.

The clear implication for the US is that it may one day be subject to the same end-of-cycle problem that now faces the UK, if the US authorities make the mistake of allowing the pick-up in domestic demand to become too intense, leading eventually to the re-emergence of inflation pressures.

Once that happens, a familiar vicious circle can easily set in, involving tighter monetary policy, weaker equities, a reversal in the strong exchange rate, and the manifestation of inflation problems which had hitherto been disguised by the rising exchange rate.

It does not appear that the US economy is yet generating enough inflation pressure to induce this problem in the near future.

However, it is equally clear from British experience that nothing has happened in the 1990s to make this outcome impossible in the years ahead.

News Analysis: Prime Minister Obuchi is like 'a bald man trying to pull himself out of a morass by his hair'

Can Japan's old hands pull it off?

By STEPHEN VINES

OUTSIDERS find Japanese jokes hard to appreciate. Yet even the most obtuse foreigner can understand the wags at the Tokyo stock exchange who describe the new government led by Keizo Obuchi as being like a 'bald man trying to pull himself out of a morass by clutching his hair.'

The task facing the new prime minister is so vast and the chances of success so low that it is surprising that there were any contestants for the post, let alone the three who stepped forward.

Before being installed as prime minister by a vote in the lower house, the House of Representatives (although he was rejected by the upper house), market makers had been trumpeting the belief that Japan did not want a prime minister who was drawn from the mould of the 24 other prime ministers who have run the country since the war.

However Mr Obuchi, 61, is every bit an old-style machine politician who has risen steadily through the ranks and, in these times of economic woes, has little economic experience.

Once the new prime minister was installed last Thursday these very same financial markets players were performing a turnaround, suggesting that a steady hand on the rudder was just what Japan needed, and that appointment of 78-year-old Kiichi Miyazawa as finance minister sent out a reassuring signal.

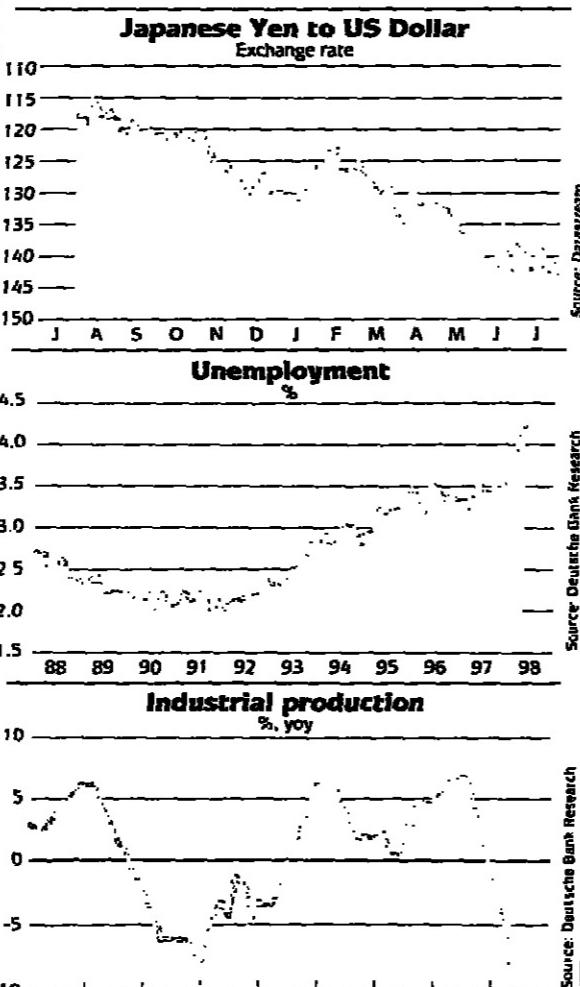
Mr Miyazawa, a former prime minister, has been around so long that everyone knows him, including key American economic policymakers such as the Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve. They feel comfortable with him even though he had made it clear he was reluctant to take the job.

His disciple Koichi Kato, the outgoing secretary-general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, had already turned down the post because he aspires to the premiership and knows the pitfalls of being finance minister. Nevertheless he will do most of the legwork for Mr Miyazawa. The Obuchi-Miyazawa team faces the worst recession for half a century. Moreover all indicators indicate that it has not bottomed out.

The outgoing government had suggested that the economy could recover and expand by 1.9 per cent in the current fiscal year. Taichi Sakaiya, the new head of the Economic Planning Agency, firmly laid such optimism to rest at the end of last week saying: 'I think it's impossible', and adding: 'I myself foresee a major minus'.



THE NEW REGIME'S UPHILL STRUGGLE



not be intervening in the markets to support the currency. "The market is cleverer than the government and things can be left to the market," he said.

So what is the new team's strategy for getting out of this mess? "The most effective way is to throw money at consumption," said Mr Miyazawa. This is precisely the strategy being urged on the Japanese by the United States and practically everyone else worried that Japan will pull down the rest of the global economy.

In concrete terms it means that the government will try to implement a six trillion yen (£26bn) tax cut. Government spending is set to rise sharply with a further £44bn being thrown into the kitty, which in turn will add to domestic consumption.

Old ideas about reducing the budget deficit have been thrown out of the window and the government now accepts that it will need to issue deficit-covering bonds to finance this expenditure and the tax cutting measures.

However, an increasing flow of government paper poses the risk of further lowering Japanese credit ratings, which in turn means that even government debt would carry very high rates of interest.

The state of the commercial banking sector is so weak that even government optimists are not planning a solution.

The strategy is simple. To try to achieve a soft landing by creating officially sponsored "bridge banks" which will protect depositors of banks in difficulties. Some 266 billion yen (£1.6bn) is being set aside for bridging loans, representing less than a third of the bad debt total, if more pessimistic estimates of that total are used.

The solutions proposed by the new government do not inspire much confidence. Some believe far more brutal measures are required which involve allowing more banks and other financial institutions to close alongside companies who cannot repay their debts.

This short, sharp shock treatment is seen as preferable to a drawn-out period of economic pain, holding out the hope of recovery in a shorter period.

Japanese government and corporate culture makes it hard to accept the short, sharp shock solution. Indeed it's hard to see how this could be implemented. Besides which, mass closures of companies and a sharp reduction in the size of the financial sector may knock away some of the strong foundations which created the Japanese economic miracle - a miracle now only dimly remembered.

BT blocks floating off Cellnet

By PETER THAL LARSEN

Securicor had been exploring the possibility of a stock market listing as a way of realising the value of its investment in the group.

BT is also due to receive a \$7bn (£4bn) cash payment in return for its 20 per cent stake in MCI, the US telecom giant whose merger with Worldcom is due to be cleared later this month.

Although the group has asked shareholders for permission to buy back 10 per cent of its shares, Peter Bonfield, BT's chief executive, has hinted that the group has better uses for the cash. The \$10bn (£6bn) joint venture with AT&T, unveiled last week, does not require BT to invest any cash.

BT was thought to have agreed a price of £1.2bn for the stake when the deal was blocked.

Securicor now believes BT would have to offer twice as much to clinch a deal, but observers reckon BT will not pay more than £2bn. This may explain why BT opposed the flotation.

Moreover, BT is not believed to be in any hurry to do a deal. The group has always maintained it would like to own all of Cellnet, if the government would allow it, to fully integrate the mobile operator into its business, offering subscribers a single bill for all their mobile and fixed-line calls.

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BUSINESS

BRIEFING

Few signs of slowdown in US

THERE ARE few signs of a widespread economic slowdown in the US, and the inflation outlook remains relatively benign, according to official figures out yesterday. The US unemployment rate held steady at 4.5 per cent in July, and employers reported a small but positive net gain in jobs of 66,000.

The jobs figures were depressed by the General Motors strike, analysts said, and August's numbers are expected to show a marked increase in labour demand.

Despite the continued growth in payroll numbers, there were few signs of accelerating wage inflation. Manufacturing hourly earnings, which were depressed by the General Motors strike, fell by 0.3 per cent. Wall Street received the labour market data well, and analysts said the numbers should help persuade the US Federal Reserve to hold fire on rates.

£15m profit from housebuilder sale



TONY K PIDGLEY (left) is set to pocket £15m from the sale of his company to Berkeley group, the housebuilder founded and headed by his father, Tony W Pidgley. The 29-year-old entrepreneur yesterday announced the sale of his luxury housebuilder Thirlstone to Berkeley for £4m in cash and £1m in Berkeley shares.

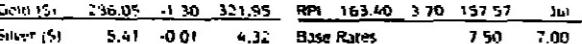
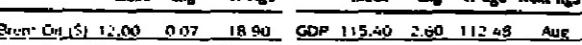
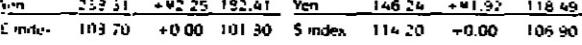
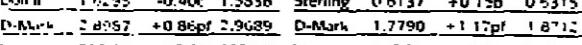
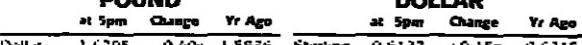
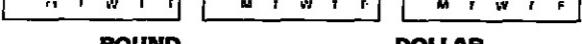
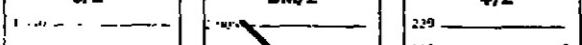
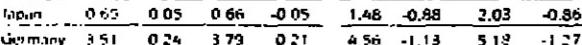
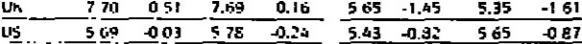
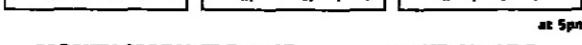
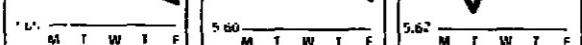
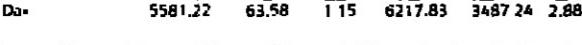
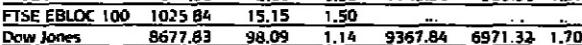
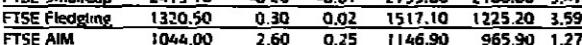
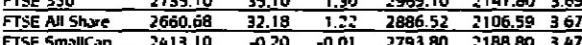
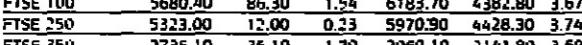
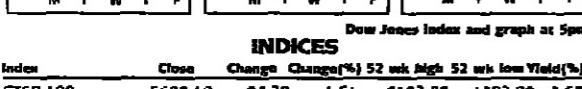
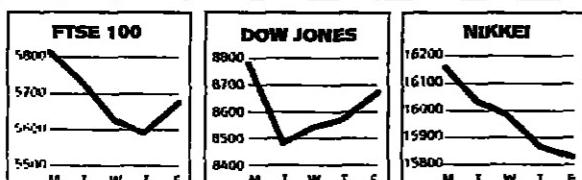
Mr Pidgley junior will also become managing director of Berkeley's Home Counties subsidiary and will sit on the board alongside his father, who is group managing director. The move puts him in pole position to succeed Mr Pidgley senior when he decides to step down.

Nokia takes stake in Filtronic

FILTRONIC YESTERDAY unveiled a deal which will see Nokia, the Finnish mobile phone giant, take a 7.5 per cent shareholding in the electronics group. Filtronic is buying LK-Products, a supplier of components for mobile phone base stations and handsets, from Nokia in return for FILM30 (£39.8m) in cash and 4 million Filtronic shares.

John Samuel, Filtronic's finance director, said the deal gave the group a much closer relationship with Nokia, one of its major customers. Shares in Filtronic, which is expected to carry out a placing and open offer of about 10 per cent of its equity to fund the deal, jumped 98.5p to 568.5p.

STOCK MARKETS



BA begins to feel the summer heat

AS SUMMER sales go, the decision by British Airways to sell off 2 million tickets at bargain basement prices this weekend takes some beating. To put the offer into perspective, that is equal to 6 per cent of its annual passenger traffic. It is, of course, not an act of complete philanthropy towards the travelling public. Many of the seats on offer would otherwise have remained empty; others are on routes where business traffic has dried up for the summer. The promotion will also act as a loss-leader, tempting some passengers into travel agents and ticket shops where they will end up paying the full fare. Then there is the sheer public relations value of the exercise, which is considerable.

This is also much more than just a summer clearance sale sparked by BA would have us believe, by the football factor. The World Cup may have kept lots of us glued to the television when we could otherwise have been booking holidays. But it cannot explain why BA suddenly has two million seats to sell.

A better explanation is that BA is beginning to feel the heat. For all its



MICHAEL HARRISON

protests about how competitive the airline market has become, the fact remains that BA enjoys an extraordinarily dominant position, if not a monopoly. It accounts for nearly 40 per cent of all the take-off and landing slots at Heathrow, the world's busiest international airport, a position built up over years of public ownership and bequeathed to shareholders on privatisations.

Like all monopolists, BA instinctively

feasts on its customers whenever and wherever it can. Where it cannot because it faces competition, the instinct is to crush the opposition with low-priced fares, particularly if their pockets are not as deep as BA's.

We are witnessing something of that this weekend. Virtually all the cut-price deals are on domestic and European routes, where BA faces competition from the low cost operators such as Debonair, easyJet and Ryanair. Ask for two-thirds off the standard Heathrow-New York air fare this weekend and you will be politely shown the door. Ask for a £79 return fare to Nice (including airport taxes) and the sky's the limit. It just so happens that BA competes with three low-cost operators on that route. It is a similar story on routes to Scandinavia. Once the most expensive air corridors in the world, they have been brought within reach of most pockets by the likes of Ryanair. Thanks to BA you will be able to fly to any of the four capital cities for £89 between now and Christmas.

But that's enough free advertising for

one day. BA holds over 3,000 weekly slots at Heathrow and thousands more at Gatwick and regional hubs like Manchester and Birmingham. It is perfectly entitled to use them however it sees fit.

But the argument raging right now between the competition authorities in Brussels and London is whether it should also be allowed to sell them. The European Competition Commissioner, Karel Van Miert, says no. The Director General of Fair Trading, John Bridgeman, says yes. The stand-off could cause yet further delay to the BA-American Airlines alliance since approval for the deal relies on the two airlines relinquishing 267 weekly slots. The difference between whether they are surrendered for free or sold could be as much as 500m.

There is already a grey market in slots at Heathrow and other capacity constrained airports. American Airlines and United Airlines recognise as much when they bought TWA and Pan Am's Heathrow routes in the late 1980s.

The question of who owns airport slots

is a murky one. Under the system of grandfather rights, airlines have the right to the use of slots allocated to them over time. But does that also mean they own them? Or do they belong to the airport or the Civil Aviation Authority, which regulates airlines. Do they, in fact, as deep as BA's.

Mr Van Miert thinks not, which is why he believes BA should surrender them to new entrants without compensation. Mr Bridgeman thinks possession is nine-tenths of the law and that the alliance should be able to realise the value of those slots when they are sold, just as companies do when they are required to dispose of assets in return for approval to merge. The OFT's argument goes further, claiming that the sale of slots is the most competitive way of allocating them since they would go the distance that would make the best use of them.

What this argument tends to obscure is that BA never really paid for the slots in the first place, unlike other assets such as aircraft or engineering workshops. Second, there is a huge economic benefit

to BA and American of being allowed to merge their transatlantic services. The two airlines have been careful never to quantify what that is in public. But when Lufthansa and United Airlines got together in a similar alliance, they said it was worth the equivalent of one extra jumbo jet load of passengers a day.

BA and American have been waiting for approval of their merger for more than two years now and probably calculate they have little to lose by exploring any avenue open to them. If they think the OFT's view has a chance of prevailing over that of Brussels, then why not wait a little longer?

But the whole bureaucratic process of regulatory approval is threatening to result in ossification. BA is delaying an announcement about whether a £2bn jet order will go to Airbus or Boeing in the hope that it can never get a better deal out of Brussels. In the meantime, rival alliances go from strength to strength while BA's strategy remains fuzzy and its share price bemused. At some point, BA's chief executive, Bob Ayling, has to decide where his bottom line lies.

A&L profits from lending share boost

ALLIANCE & LEICESTER has bucked a gloomy trend among converted building societies by boosting its share of the mortgage market since becoming a bank.

The bank's share of net lending rose by nearly a quarter from 4.5 to 5.5 per cent in the first half of the year. The building society became a bank in April 1997.

The rise was in stark contrast to the Woolwich and Halifax, both suffering the effects of borrowers redeeming mortgages after conversion. Both have seen their shares of the market shrink to around a third of their normal size.

A&L's success in boosting market share appears to support a theory that smaller building societies have had greater success in converting to banks than their larger rivals.

BY ANDREW VERTY

Richard Pym, the finance director, said: "It is much harder for Halifax and Abbey National to defend a 20 or 15 per cent share than it is for us. It is easier to attack from a lower number."

"What we did was to go ourselves in order. We organised our sales effort much better and were more consistent in our approach to the market. It was a better sales effort."

A&L followed a similar pattern to Northern Rock, another of the smaller converted societies, in capturing business from the bigger lenders.

The bank moved heavily into fixed-interest mortgages, once a small fraction of its loan portfolio. In the first half of 1998, fixed-interest loans made up 66 per cent of its loans extended.

Mr Pym said the charge level against Northern Rock - that it may have sacrificed profitability for bulk sales of variable rate mortgages - did not apply to A&L. "We stick to minimum profit criteria for each particular product," he said.

Headline profits jumped by 29 per cent to £230m. Underlying profits, excluding £28m of conversion costs last year, showed a more modest 12 per cent rise. The shares rose by 15p to close at 868p.

Interest income was boosted by higher interest rates and a big increase in unsecured lending through the bank's personal finance arm, which extends small-ticket personal loans to customers.

Unlike Woolwich or Halifax, Alliance & Leicester is resisting pressure from the City to use its spare capital of £700m

for a share buyback programme. Instead, the money is being held back for possible acquisitions.

Mr Pym said A&L was currently "very underleveraged" and would seek acquisitions only if they allowed new products to be introduced to A&L customers. "What we are interested in is either increasing our customer base or bringing additional products to our customer base."

In what was a veiled swipe at rival mortgage banks, he added: "The thing we are not interested in is acquisitions overseas. The real reason UK banks go overseas is boredom. The whole history of it is that they get absolutely suckered by the locals, just the same as continental banks coming to the UK. You end up as lender of last resort to the natives."

IN BRIEF

Investment trust offer extended

ABERDEEN PREFERRED Income, the investment trust engaged in a hostile bid to manage the £600m Scottish National Investment Trust, yesterday extended its offer to shareholders after attracting less than 15 per cent of its bid.

A brief's offer, which involves offering a big headline yield to investors, has captured less than 8 per cent of three classes of shareholders - stepped preference, zero dividend preference and capital shareholders. Its offer will now be extended until 20 August.

COMPANY WINDING-UP petitions rose by 5 per cent in the second quarter of the year, according to figures released by the Lord Chancellor's Department. It said 3,849 company winding-up petitions were issued in England and Wales in the three months to June, compared with 2,724 in the same period last year.

Separately, NTC Research released a survey showing that labour market conditions tightened further in July, despite signs of a UK economic slowdown. Growing skill shortages led to another sharp increase in pay, NTC said. The Bank of England and the government have both expressed concern about the impact of the growth of private sector pay on the outlook for inflation.

OCEAN GROUP, the transport and logistics company, yesterday confirmed it was buying Texas-based Skyking Freight Systems to expand its air-freight forwarding operations. Ocean said that under the terms of the acquisition there would be an initial cash payment of \$8m, a further cash payment of \$16.5m after 12 months and an earn-out arrangement based on Skyking's profits over the next five years which was presently expected to be \$10m but was subject to a maximum of \$60m.

Skyking has 14 regional offices in the US, a client base of 6,000 and reported underlying operating profits of \$2.5m in 1997 on sales of \$38m with a net asset value of \$1.75m.

Oil glut warning

THE WORLD'S oil glut will get worse before it gets better, with a huge excess of inventories set to spill over into next year, the International Energy Agency said yesterday. Publishing its first projections for 1999, the agency said it was expecting a modest recovery in global oil demand growth. Brent crude traded at just \$12.80 a barrel yesterday, a third lower than average prices last year.

A senior US Treasury official urged Japan to move quickly to enact the economic stimulus package and reform its banking sector. He said: "Prime Minister Obuchi outlines some promising and constructive steps to stimulate Japan's economy. We urge the government to move as quickly as possible to implement them into place."

The renewed yen weakness and the worsening economic conditions in China rekindled fears of a devaluation of the Chinese yuan. Mr Derk said: "The situation in China has definitely worsened. The floods will have an enormous economic impact."

The yuan fell to 9.2 to the US dollar on the Shanghai black market, 9 per cent lower than the official rate. Analysts said fears of a Chinese devaluation also lay behind the fall in the Hang Seng and the pressure on the Hong Kong dollar.

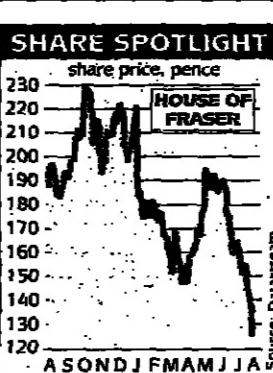
JPY 110.50

Retailers discounted as Footsie rallies

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN



AS FOOTIE achieved its only advance of the week retailers were again left on the shelf. Yet another profit warning - this time from Alders - did the damage.

The nation's shopkeepers have suffered as the stock market became aware consumers were under pressure and cutting back on their spending.

A steady flow of cautious trading statements and outright profit warnings have pushed many shares to their year's low with some looking demoralised. Recent sales data has been disappointing with indications last month was particularly unrewarding.

Next, once the high flying darling of fashion, is looking decidedly threadbare. The shares fell 12.5p to 435.5p, lowest for more than two years, before cutting the fall to 3p. They were riding at an 835p peak before a profit warning hit in March.

Others under pressure included WH Smith, off 20.5p to 422p; Tie Rack 5p to 41.5p and poor old MFI, the furniture chain, now down to 50p against a 205p high. Tie Rack, which tied up a profit warning last month, topped 200p last year.

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SEARS managed to find another low, off 2.5p to 212p and recent off-spring Selfridges

BOOKER, the hard-pressed cash and carry group, is in talks which could lead to a merger.

After its shares had risen a further 15.5p to 242p, the company rushed out a statement referring to talks with various parties on a range of options. Booker has risen 28.5p this week on stories of a German bid, with the giant retailer Metro rumoured as the predator. Metro denied it was interested.

The shares were riding at 353.5p at the start of the year.

further below its asset value, down 3.5p to 207p.

Marks & Spencer, the retailing aristocrat, has not avoided the bruises. The shares fell 1.5p to 503p, just above their 12 month low.

Department stores chain Alders slumped 50.5p to 139p after warning profits would not reach the £23.5m the market expected but would not be less than £19m.

House of Fraser retreated 9.5p to 125p. On Tuesday SG Securities cut its profit forecast from 35m to £25.5m.

Allied Domecq, which has been in the doldrums, frothed 30.5p to 58.5p and Rank the

leisure group, hardened 14p to 337p on hopes of corporate action.

Many neglected stocks attracted some support. Pilkington, the glassmaker, managed a 3.5p gain to 98.5p and builder Redrow firmed 4p to 134p.

Jarvis, the construction and maintenance group, added another 13.5p to 643.5p ahead of Tuesday's investment presentation.

Shire Pharmaceuticals recovered 63p (to 356.5p) of its winding fall and Tepnel Life Sciences reflected the removal of an overhang with a further 3p gain to 26p.

Dennis, the coach maker accelerated 62p to 468p after Mayflower, a maker of car bodies, said it was prepared to bid 450p. Mayflower, off 2p at 185p, is barging into a comfy merger between Dennis and Henrys, a bus and coach maker, on 61p at 535p.

Crabtree, an engineer contemplating a management buy out, hardened 2p to 49.5p.

Filtropic, a maker of bits and pieces for mobile phones, jumped 9.5p to 56.5p after buying a similar business from Nokia, the Finnish group for £40m in cash and shares. The deal gives the Finns a 7.5 per cent stake in Filtropic, which on Monday acquired a US group

ACQUISITIVE Eanstone, the vehicle for Vaughan McLeod, former head of Enniscorthy, is likely to take a significant stake in Drings, the Bath stonemason.

It plans to inject its natural stone and concrete business into Drings in exchange for cash and shares.

Drings, suspended at 2p, has had a difficult time since arriving on the market two years ago at 3p. Eanstone, formerly Albrington, acquired Brantcliffe Aggregates for £2.2m in September.

for £26m.

Oliver, the shoe retailer, held at 24.5p after Hush Puppies, declared a 3.96 per cent stake and an institution took 4.16 per cent. And Sketchley, where Guinness Peat has built a stake, held at 31.5p as Guinness Mahon and Sterling Property each notified interests approaching 4 per cent. On Oxfex newcomer Airtel ATN, placed at 20p, moved to 35.5p.

SEAG VOLUME: 780.7m
SEAG TRADES: 55,603
GILTS INDEX: n/a

Allders warns on profits

BY JOHN WILLCOCK

SHARES IN Allders fell 50.5p to 139p yesterday after the department stores group warned that pre-tax profit in the current financial year would be below analysts' forecasts, but not less than £19m.

Allders blamed rising interest rates, which kept shoppers at home during the summer sales. It said it had seen disappointing revenues during the sale and that it was unlikely to make up the shortfall during the rest of the season.

Nick Bubb, an analyst at SG Securities, said Allders had mistimed its summer sales. Mr Bubb reduced his pre-tax profit forecast, along with other analysts, to £19m from £23.5m and moved his recommendation to "hold" from "buy".

Allders said the former Maples stores bought last September had taken longer than expected to establish themselves under the Allders brand.

Harvey Lipsmith, chief executive, said: "I am disappointed to have to cut back our profit expectations for this financial year particularly after last year's outstanding performance and an encouraging first half this year. But it is now

clear that six increases in interest rates have taken their toll of consumer confidence."

Mr Lipsmith said the conversion of the six Maples stores was completed three months behind schedule. The delay, on top of the conversion costs, had wiped around £2m off profits.

Mr Lipsmith denied the warning signified a trend among shoppers away from department stores and towards specialist multiple chains. "While some department stores have been suffering from this downturn, I think we have some horrible figures awaiting us from the multiples," he said.

SPORT

Kidding around with the legend of Christie

I WAS watching Linford Christie change a nappy the other weekend - not watching intently, but taking enough notice, as one who has changed more than a few, to appreciate a job well done.

The nappy in question belonged to Christie's 18-month old daughter, Briannah, as indeed did the fresh one which had been passed to him through the window of the spectators' box at the AAA Championships, where I was interviewing him. Briannah had come along for company, and after a laudable display of sweetness and patience, eventually lapsed into banging the tip-up seats about - as you do when the grown-ups get boring - before moving to the dirty protest stage.

Not for the first time at these championships, Christie got swift-



MIKE
ROWBOTTOM

ly into action: "Does this make me a New Man?" he asked with a grin. "Take her home," I thought, "take her home and feed her and clear up the sledge on the high chair; give her a bath, get her ready for bed, look

for her teddy, promise to find her teddy later, read her a story, tuck her in, tell her if she doesn't go to sleep you won't bring her teddy, stop her crying, tell her if she does go to sleep you will bring her teddy. Bring her her teddy. Repeat, daily. Perhaps he did just that.

Anyway, this conjunction of Christie and kids prompted an anxiety-inducing recollection to do with... well, Christie and kids, although the question in question was no more than the subject of discussion.

It was June 1995, on the day after Christie had broken down in tears on Carlton TV's *Sport in Question* programme and said he couldn't face defending his Olympic 100 metres title the following summer. A few days earlier I had spoken

to him at some length, and now I was attempting to bundle the whole thing together in an article when the phone rang and I was asked if I would appear on a cable television programme to discuss the subject.

It was agreed that, although I was not free to come into the studio, I would be rung at an appointed time to contribute. So, no problem. Well, slight problem, in fact, as I was in charge of two of my children, the younger of whom was having one of those "why?" and "why not?" kind of days. She had never been a terrible two. But today she was a fractious four.

A minute before the appointed time, having set the children up drawing in the kitchen with an additional, craven bait of crisps, I stood upstairs with the phone to the

sanctuary of the front bedroom. And shut the door. And waited.

The familiar sound of conflict made its way out of the kitchen, up the stairs and into my suddenly thudding veins. It might have been proprietorial or perhaps territorial. Did I have time to...? The phone detonated.

"Hello, is that Mike Rowbottom?" I was connected, and listening at one remove to bright voices, one male, one female. "You'll be on in a minute, if you'd like to hold," my caller said. "Can you hear the feed?" I could indeed hear the feed. And I could also hear the more local dispute over feed. And I could also hear my four-year-old approaching.

I had a choice. I could open the door, promise her sweets-teddy-crisps-Tango-anything, and hope

that she would co-operate. Or I could simply cower in here a little longer, hoping that her search of the first floor would be incomplete by the time I had said my piece.

"You're on," my other caller said, before giving way to the second, female voice.

"Now with us on the line we have Mike Rowbottom, of

The Independent, who spent the weekend with Linford Christie..." Had I done that? Surely I would have remembered? "Mike, what sort of state of mind do you think Linford is in now?" "Daddy!" "Will he really quit?" "Daddy, Daddy!" Two rooms away, and holding.

"Well," I responded. "I personally don't think he will be able to resist the attraction of running in the Olympic Games, because ever since he started at this level he has

always been a championship runner..." "Daddy where are you?"

"And that has always been his strength, so I personally can't see that, when the Games actually come round, he will be able to say no." A male voice demanded: "Is it just that he's too old?" Footsteps.

"Well, obviously, he's older than a lot of his rivals, but he only started competing properly at 26, so in real terms he's not that old, he's probably only about..." "Mike, thanks for that," the female voice said. "Now car-clamping can always be relied upon to get people's hackles up..." Another voice was talking to me now. "Hello? Mike?" That was great. Thanks ever so much for all your help." "No problem," I said, as the door handle began to rattle. "It was a pleasure."

Yates faces an unenviable test of character

ENGLAND'S FRONT row future emerged blinking into the sunlight in Bath yesterday, only to discover the demons of his recent past running riot across the lush green carpet of the Recreation Ground. Kevin Yates may be a World Cup cornerstone in the making and he may be in the best physical shape of his life, but it still takes only a single flicker of a camera shutter to remind him of the psychological burden of sporting notoriety.

The television crews almost fell over themselves in the rush to pin their man against the nearest Georgian backdrop and ask him the big question: "Okay Kev, we're six months down the road. Did you bite him or didn't you?"

Yates, making his first public Bath appearance since the dark days of last February, was having none of it and, with a mumbled, monosyllabic apology, he departed briskly from his car. The only response came from his fellow prop, Victor Ubogu, who belied: "Leave him alone, can't you? The guy's off limits."

He will find it difficult to stay off limits indefinitely as the 25-year-old loose-head has elected to rebuild a high profile career at the scene of the crime, as it were.

Sporting crowds rarely forget a scandal and to the terrace comedians Yates will forever be remembered as the man who, during a cup match just after Christmas, helped himself to a piece of ear belonging to Simon Fenn, the London Scottish flanker. It will not matter a jot that he protested, and continues to protest, his innocence. He is fair game.

According to his colleagues, however, Yates' obvious discomfort at yesterday's official squad announcement and photo-call is not reflected in the more private surroundings of the dressing room. "I think he's adapted incredibly well," said John Mallett, a close friend and fellow front-rower whose unstinting moral support helped Yates survive the most traumatic disciplinary saga in the history of the English game.

"As far as Kevin is concerned, it's over. Finished. There will be no hard feelings about the way he was treated, no recriminations. He has

Eight months after shocking the world of rugby union by biting an opponent's ear, the Bath prop is back. By Chris Hewett

a tremendous amount to look forward to. There aren't many props in this country who can touch him and I think he'll be back in the England squad very quickly."

Andy Robinson, the Bath coach, was the intriguing view that Yates will reap long-term benefits from his enforced absence from the game. "Look at Neil Back's career path," said the former England flanker. "He received a similar suspension for shoving the referee after the cup final against us in 1996 and used the time to put his body back together with a proper training regime.

"He re-emerged twice the player and there's been no stopping him since. Kevin will be the same. I'm sure. He's a big talent who now has a big fitness base from which to operate. He won't have enjoyed the last six months but there are positives he can take from the experience."

The Yates affair split the Bath dressing room in two - some players applauded the management's decision to suspend Yates pending a variety of disciplinary investigations, others were infuriated by what they saw as rank disloyalty to one of their own - but Robinson is confident that the old fraternal spirit has been pieced back together. His appointment as captain of Richard Webster, the former Wales and Lions loose-forward, is seen as a major step towards re-creating the bonds.

"Richard is a club captain rather than first team captain," explained the coach. "He's not guaranteed a place in the starting line-up but we consider him a person who personifies this club and embodies the criteria we lay down for anyone wishing to call himself a Bath player.

"He leads and off the field in a way that pulls in all the different strands and creates a sense of common purpose."

Webster nodded sagely before adding: "I know a bit about leadership. I'm definitely in charge in my house."

Robinson is now seeking to finalise two international signings to supplement the arrivals of Ben Sturham from Saracens, Jim Fallon from Richmond and the brilliant 19-year-old scrum-half prospect from Wales, Gareth Cooper. Jon Preston, the versatile All Black half-back, is 99 per cent certain to switch hemispheres - apart from anything else, he kicks goals," enthused Robinson - and there is also a move to recruit Kevin Maggs, the Irish centre who is now a free agent as a result of Bristol's descent into receivership.

"It's been a funny old summer," said Tony Swift, the Bath chief executive. "We seem to have been linked with every player in every transfer market in world rugby and we've been portrayed as some sort of predatory monster, homing in on everyone's best talent with a chequebook between our teeth."

"It's not the case, of course. We've gone after specific players and yes, we've said we're prepared to pay realistic transfer fees. Some have come our way and some, like David Rees at Sale or Malcolm O'Kelly at London Irish, have stayed put. Why do we get all the crap in the papers? We've played it straight down the line."

Swift is steering well clear of the grandiose predictions made by some of his colleagues in the tone to distant past. "I think it was two years ago that we sat here and boldly said we were going to win all four major tournaments available to us," he recalled with embarrassment. "Given that we didn't win a thing that season, I won't go any further than to say that our sole objective is to challenge for major honours."

For Kevin Yates, the challenge is far more personal and immeasurably more difficult. The strength of his scrummaging has never been questioned. We are now about to learn something of his strength of character.



Kevin Yates will have to put up with the jibes as he rebuilds his Bath and England career

Robert Hallam

Desperate for a piece of the pre-season action

THERE ARE two kinds of football fans (for the purposes of this discussion, anyway). There are those who will watch all their own team's matches and catch most of the other big games on the TV, but who find the prospect of, say, Huddersfield v Portsmouth or Sky about as attractive as an early bath with Vinnie Jones (apologies to those for whom this is a pleasant prospect).

Then there are those who'll watch anything. Even pre-season friendlies. There's probably a good piece to be written about the new breed of armchair fan, who can watch football on the telly virtually round the clock these days. The type who would have happily let several hours go by of what, after all, is a strictly limited life span, watching Channel 5 and Eurosport this week.

CHRIS MAUME
VIEW FROM
THE ARMCHAIR

Don't get me wrong. I understand the purpose of pre-season friendlies, but it's a bit much putting them on the box. Am I alone in finding it astounding that a terrestrial non-specialist station, Channel 5, should screen games from a warm-up tournament in the Netherlands in prime time? I'm not saying it shouldn't happen - nobody needs to watch, after all, and I suspect few did

- but it smacks of a desperation to grab a piece, any piece, of the action. Derelict of duty as usual, I couldn't take more than about half an hour of flipping between channels on Tuesday. On CS it was a case of Spot The Fan at Arnhem, where Chelsea were losing desultorily to Atletico Madrid. The occasional shout echoed round the ground, making it sound like the public swimming baths, but it was left to the ever-reliable Dennis Wise to liven up a perfunctory but deadly dull affair towards the end with a characteristic spot of stamping that earned him a red card.

There was a more lively atmosphere over on Eurosport for Manchester United's visit to Brann Bergen, where there was even some chanting (it being Scandinavia, they were presumably all United fans). You

could tell it was pre-season by the fact that Jordi Cruyff was playing, but this was the kind of match where there's a bit more at stake, with the hosts anxious to impress their lottery guests, and it felt a little more like the real thing - but only a little more. Andy Cole, a man with something to prove, made it 4-0 with a three-touch goal (instep-thigh-instep-back of the net) worthy of Dennis Bergkamp. When I said this to the Arsenal fan I was watching with, she was very nearly on the phone to her mates to organise a spot of bother for me.

Sky usually unveil a lavish new advertisement to kick off the season, but this year's is distinctly underwhelming. "You love football. We love football," it says, superfluously, over shots of people like Sister Joseph, a Toon-supporting nun, and profes-

sional Owl Roy Hattersley plus his dog Buster - then, to top it all off, the apalling Mick Hucknall, sitting in a dressing room smiling coyly at the camera while the soundtrack he mangies the old Hollies number: "The Air That I Breathe" (which was rubbish to begin with). Why that song, plaintive yet plodding? What are Sky trying to say to us? Why put out an ad in which every shot is a cliché, full of that spurious romanticism and those overfilled skies? What if it says, "We've got most of the football you're going to watch this season, so frankly we don't have to try that hard." Depressingly, they're right.

Like most sports that didn't involve the proverbial 22 men kicking a ball, athletics dropped off the scale of public interest this summer and, though Channel 4 are trying to keep things going, it took Roger Black's involuntary farewell last Sunday for the sport to impinge on the national consciousness. Even with the European Championships approaching, it was difficult to get too worked up about the Stockholm Grand Prix on Wednesday (CA and Eurosport).

Part of athletics' diminishing appeal in this country is the paucity of British world-beaters, of course, and it was left to Jonathan Edwards and Steve Backley to remind us of the old days when we used to win things. "Backley won the javelin with Mick Hill in fourth place," said the commentator, Stuart Storey, a phrase you've heard so often it's difficult not to conclude that that is, in fact, his real name: "Mick Hill in fourth place".

The organisers were doing their best to entertain, though. As each man for the 100m final was announced, the riff from Muddy Waters' "Mannish Boy" played on the PA. Distressingly, though, the music just before the gun was the harmonica intro to Supertramp's "Crime of the Century", and I'm ashamed to say I recognised it instantly.

Like the athletics, there's a tag-end feel to the cricket as well, borne out by the swathes of empty seats at Headingly at the start of the fifth Test. It was a day of classic England - from 181 for 3 to 201 for 8 in five easy stages. There was smoke coming from the scorers' pens, said David Gower as the eighth man down, Ian Salisbury, scurried off in self-disgust. Still, by yesterday lunchtime the other lot were a few down too, so we're not the only rubbish cricket team around.

JPV1016



The village of Aberdaron, Gwynedd: 'a lovely spot with views across a wide bay'

Michael St Maur Sheil/Colorific!

'You should have been here last week' is the usual line about holidays in Britain. But, after seven wet days on the Lleyn Peninsula, Mick Webb rather wishes he'd been there this week instead

A week is a long time in Wales

With my balance almost completely lost, I tottered on a narrow ledge, one arm grasping a struggling child and the other flailing wildly, while the heavy seas crashed menacingly below us.

There was just time enough to ponder the folly of involving the whole family in hearty adventures before I miraculously found a foothold on the slippery rock.

The vertiginous scramble in search of St Mary's Well was just part of a week of outdoor fun on the Lleyn Peninsula on the very western edge of North Wales.

The plan was to forget computer-games, TV and packaged entertainment and drag our children (six of them from two families, plus a dog and a German exchange student) kicking and screaming into the fresh air.

How the week panned out:

Sunday 26 July

Arrive in Aberdaron after long drive through driving rain. Booked into a farm campsite on high windswept field. "You're a braver man than me," the farmer observes helpfully.

After battling like sailors in a round-the-world yacht race, we vanquish the elements and three tents were erected. Good team-building exercise, we reckon.

Monday

Wake up in bright sunshine to discover what a lovely spot this is with views across a wide bay, and only a gentle stroll away from the village of Aberdaron with its two stores, pub, excellent bakery, tea-shop, and small hotel that was still offering "last-minute vacancies".

Other holidaymakers are not much in evidence, which means the curving beach was mostly empty. This is sea for bathting with, rather than bathing in, but there are plenty of other distractions for all ages: falling off a windsurfer, building variations on sandcastles – the children make a dragon out of sand; and collecting pebbles, seaweed and yucky things – the younger ones find two dead dogfish and an equally defunct plaice.

Tuesday

Lifting the tent flap reveals ... nothing, apart from a very low, very wet cloud, that appears to have settled in for the duration. We pack picnic and set out on cliff-top walk to St Mary's Well (the Ordnance Survey map shows several wells, and an equal number of sheep-dips). We meet a sheep-farmer using a quad bike to shepherd his flock, most of which have nasty coughs.

"Do you think the weather'll improve?" we ask.

"Oh, yes," he says. "Next year." This is supposed to be a splendid

area for wildlife but we don't find any of the rare crow-like birds called choughs, and the visibility is too poor to see if there are any seals down on the rocks.

Blancs (10 years old) does spot a yellow-hammer which, just as the bird-book says, sings "a little-bit-of-bread-and-no-cheese". Well, it does if you know that's what it's supposed to be singing. Fortunately our picnic is composed of lots of very good large bread rolls and loads of cheese. Unfortunately, we have to eat standing up as the grass is saturated.

Silas (five) has such wet trousers he can't walk, but we carry him and press on to St Mary's Well. It's not easy to find – we heard later of someone who's been looking for it on and off for 50 years. But then you don't expect to find a well halfway up a cliff, which is where it is. Helen (13) thinks the lack of signposting is deliberate, as it's so dangerous getting there.

After my narrow escape from disaster, we fill a bottle with the water "the sweetest in Wales" (according to a man in the pub at Aberdaron), though by the time we get it back to the tent it had begun to pong. Some things just don't travel, do they?

Wednesday

Weather no better. Expedition to buy wellies and socks to nearest town: Abersoch. That's what the grown-ups pretend but the real reason is

to stock up on cheaper booze than we can get in Aberdaron. The store there provides sweet little candy-striped bags to conceal your wine-bottle, ("just in case you meet the vicar") and perhaps that is what doubles the price.

Abersoch is a good place to buy booze and wellies of all colours. It's a bustling little holiday port full of yachting-types in very clean clothes

the setting sun gives to the foam on the breaking waves.

We all are. We spend ages throwing the coloured pebbles at a plastic bottle, bank up the bonfire, sing songs and only Silas (five) is worried as he thinks our car will be locked in the car-park.

Thursday

More rain. Outlook worse. Confined to tents, one of which (mine) has almost collapsed, as a pole has broken. Running or rather sitting down, repairs are effected. The children don't seem bothered by the weather – the older ones set up a casino in one tent, the others play for hours in the cars and are joined by other small damp waifs from around the camp-site. One of their fathers comes and warms his children that cars (this one anyway) are not for playing in!

The domestic chores seem to stretch out to fill the time allotted.

We teach Thomas (16) from Germany how to wash up ("we have machines for this at home"). Thomas puts up good-naturedly with much teasing about his archetypal German habits – he is better acquainted with the campsite shower (20p in the slot for hot water) than all the rest of us put together. He also has a teutonic capacity for beer, wine, coffee and food, often all at the same time.

Our main meals all comprise

variations on what you can cook in a large pot and serve with rice/pasta/potatoes, described as "strange, stowy contraptions" (Alec 10) and "all horrible except for breakfast" (Silas, 5).

I'm not sure that the local cuisine is a lot better, though the Bramley apple cake at the Y Gegin Fawr tea-house is ace, and there's a nice cheese called Bardsey Chieftain (named after an island that's inhabited not by people, but by the spirits of 20,000 saints, though we couldn't afford the £100 boat fare to verify this).

Friday

No improvement in the weather. Adults becoming rather moody and, in one case, almost clinically depressed.

We start drinking at lunch-time rather than in the evening. The children, on the other hand seem perfectly sanguine, and join wholeheartedly in the composition of a song about our holiday with the following immortal chorus:

*Oh how we love Aberdaron,
Oh what a beautiful bay
The spirits of Bardsey are calling,
A pity the skies are so grey*

In the afternoon a trip is organised to Whistling Sands, a beautiful bay owned by the National Trust where a dip in the cold water revives flagging

spirits. The rock-pools here are well-stocked and a boy from Manchester called Graham achieves immediate hero-status with our children for his prowess in catching crabs.

Back at the camp, a man and his family arrive with a trailer filled with kites. He's a professional kite-maker and soon the sky is humming with strange flying lilo's.

Adults repair to the pub and return at midnight. Thomas the German repairs to another pub and returns with various new acquaintances at 3am.

Saturday

An ironic but brief burst of sunshine accompanies the taking down and packing-up. We drive home past the rather more conventional holiday sites we might have visited: the stately home at Plas yr Rhw; a Butlin's holiday camp with day-rates for visitors; the Blaenau Ffestiniog railway; and the extraordinary Italianate village of Portmeirion. I'd like to have stopped there but by now it is pouring with rain again.

Overall, amazingly enough, everyone seems to have enjoyed the experience. Clarrie (15) says she wasn't at all jealous of her friends who were clubbing in Minorca, and Alec (10) summed it up as "cool".

It certainly was. And wet. And cheap – £4 per family per night for the campsite.

St. Catherine's Monastery & Petra

visiting St. Catherine's Monastery and the Rose Red City of Petra

The convenient location of the 4-star Coral Hilton Hotel in Nuweiba makes it possible to combine the fascinating sights of St Catherine's Monastery with the "rose red" city of Petra. The journey is further made possible by the direct flights from London Gatwick to Sharm el-Sheikh and the regular ferry services to Aqaba.

Our journey commences with a four-night stay at the Coral Hilton Resort at Nuweiba. This will be our base both for relaxation on the Red Sea coast to enjoy the winter sunshine and our visits to St Catherine's Monastery and the Coloured Canyon. On Day 5 transfer by hydrofoil to Aqaba and travel north by road to Petra and the Inter-Continental for the next three nights.

During the stay at Petra we will visit various areas of the site (entrance fee not included) and make optional visits to Little Petra and Wadi Rum, the location of David Lean's film "Lawrence of Arabia". On Days 6/7 we are the regular passenger service to Sharm el-Sheikh and the return flight to London Gatwick.

The Petra Inter-Continental Hotel

This 4-star hotel is situated close to Petra. The 149

7 nights from £595



DEPARTURE DATES & PRICES

Thursdays 1998/99 - per person in twin

Nov 5, 12, 19, 26 £595 - Dec 3, 10, 17, 24*, 31 £595

Jan 4, 11, 18, 25 £595 - Feb 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 £635

*Supplements: Single room £165.

*Christmas/New Year £95. **Easter £50

Includes flights, Transfers, accommodation, half-board Petra, entry fees, transfers between St Catherine's Coloured Canyon, local guide, 1/2 board for 2, Not included: insurance, visa, procurer, excess baggage fees, transfers to Petra, tips. Other general Conditions of Booking (on request) shall apply to all reservations.

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The world's safest airlines

THE RAIN MAN was wrong: the world's best air safety record does not belong to Qantas, even though the Australian airline has never suffered a passenger fatality. An American carrier, Southwest, also boasts a fatality-free record, and since it started up in 1971 has flown 6 million flights – against a mere million by Qantas.

The best performance – after Southwest – is SAS. The Scandinavian airline has flown 5.4m journeys without a fatality. Ansett of Australia has managed 2.5m accident-free flights.

The best performance from a scheduled British airline is Air UK, which has operated 800,000 flights safely since 1970. Virgin Atlantic also scores a zero, but on only 50,000 flights since it began in 1984. The new low-cost

GREEN CHANNEL

free flights. Finnair, Sabena of Belgium and Aer Lingus

have all beaten the million barrier. They are joined in North America by Canadian Airlines and America West.

The best performance from a scheduled British airline is Air UK, which has operated 800,000 flights safely since 1970. Virgin Atlantic also scores a zero, but on only 50,000 flights since it began in 1984. The new low-cost

carriers Debonair, easyJet and Go also have flawless

records, though neither they – nor any charter airline – appear in the DoT figures.

Britannia Airways, the UK's biggest charter carrier, says it has operated 2 million flights since 1970 without a fatal accident, which puts it among the world's safest airlines.

TACA of El Salvador, Air Jamaica and Kenya Airways also get a zero rating.

RED CHANNEL: TANZANIA

Highway robberies, usually targeting stationary vehicles, have been reported at road junctions. These attacks may be accompanied by personal violence.

Exercise caution when in vehicles, keeping doors locked and windows shut. Visitors should be aware of occasional random incidents of armed banditry in and around the Northern National Parks. Such incidents affect both recognised tour operators and independent travellers.

Food or drink should not be accepted from strangers as it may be drugged.

A number of violent muggings of foreign tourists have recently taken place on Zanzibar. Visitors should avoid deserted beaches and exercise extreme caution in Stone Town after dark.

Visitors and residents should register with the British High Commission.

JULY 1998

PUNTERS' GUIDE

Misbah's speed can pay in International

Simon Holt of Channel 4
Racing analyses today's
Tote International Handicap

Atlantic Viking: Unattractive on his running at Newcastle where he was sent at half-way. Chewie: Looked to be given too much to do in amateur rider's race at Ascot. One to watch.

Crompton Hill: Won at Kempton in Mat Not at best in Royal Hunt Cup but must be respected.

Decorated Hero: Won a Group Three event at Newcastle over Diktat among five victories last year. Cannot be dismissed.

Emerging Market: Below form recently and is best watched.

Geoff Storm: Heavily backed for the Stewards' Cup in which he disappointed from a poor draw. Not proven over this trip.

Harmoic Way: Fourth to Geffy Storm at Newcastle. Best form has been over a furlong shorter.

Hurricane State: Needs much improved form to figure here.

Jo Mell: Staying on at Newcastle on heavy, but may find it too fast.

Kumtak: Ran well in Wokingham Handicap and was then beaten only a head in a big Newmarket handicap. Excellent chance.

Law Commission: Tricky the custumer but can shine ifin a race.

Mantastic: Has shown best form on soft and will not like it fast.

Mistaken: This is his trip and he showed his wellbeing with smooth win over six at Newmarket.

ASCOT

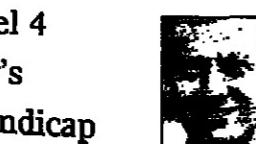
2.45: Pergine Bay has group race form and is greatly respected, but LIGHT THE ROCKET was impressive last time and can find the necessary improvement.

3.15: A hard handicap to weigh up, but one certainty is that SPirit OF LOVE is crying out for this trip. He was good enough to win at 1m6f last time and can notch up his double at the chief expense of High Tension and Island Story.

3.50: Any number can be given a decent chance here, but SHOWBOAT has a promising apprentice taking off 5lb and has also been dropped 2lb since his good sixth in the Bumby Cup, registered when his stable was going through a lean spell. Bumby Cup second and third, Kumtak and Harmonic Way, will again pose a threat.

NEWMARKET

3.00: Emma Bamford has proved herself to be well worth following in amateurs' events lately and she teams up here with ALARVAZAH. This colt lost a race last time and can be forgiven that latest defeat.



HAYDOCK

HYPERION

2.05 Blue Melody 3.45 Proud Native
2.35 Heavenly Abstone 4.20 Mutamam
3.10 Silk St John 4.50 Spring Anchor (nb)

GODS: Good. **STALLS:** 7f & m - inside, remainder - outside.

DRAW ADVANTAGE: None.

1: Almost for oval course: straight 6 furlongs.

2: Course is near junction of A550 and M6. Newton station 2m. **ADMISSION:** County Stand £27; Teesside £10; Newton Stand £5 (Cafes half-price in Teesside and Newton Stand). **CAN PARK:** Free.

3: **WEATHER:** 7f 100m (100%); 1m 100m (80%). **TIME:** 1m 100m (100%)

4: **LEADING JOCKEYS:** G. Carter 7f-9f (12%), J. Fortune 9-10f (8%), W. R. Swinburn 7-9f (7%), J. Egan 7-7f (3%).

5: **FAVOURITES:** 24-628 (34%).

6: **BUNKERED FIRST TIME:** Beneventus (31), Little Indian (42).

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3: **WEATHER**

Thermal riders risk all for the thrill of flight

THE SCORE at the end of the recent European Paragliding Championships in Piedrahita, central Spain, was Switzerland 15.529 points, Italy 14.167 pts, France 14.040 pts, one dead pilot and two seriously injured. In this sport you don't need drugs to go as high as a kite: the thrills come from soaring like an eagle and exposure to extreme risk.

What recreational paragliders claim is a relatively safe hobby transforms itself under competitive conditions. In essence, paragliding involves running from a hilltop to launch a fabric wing from which the pilot hangs, as though under a parachute.

There the similarity ends. Not only are paragliders very manoeuvrable - through the use of control lines to turn, or to increase or decrease airspeed - but they can climb as well as descend, in favourable conditions. Their original appeal lay in their portability and minimal set-up time. Fitting into an oversized rucksack, they offer mountaineers a sensational way to descend from a climb, and have even been flown off Mount Everest.

The developing challenge in the sport has been to fly ever-increasing distances, which Britain has excelled at over recent years. The team's fifth place in the European Championships this year was disappointing in the light of a run of World Championship second places,

Paragliding has become more competitive, but pilots are putting their lives on the line in search for victory. By Eric Kendall

particularly with John Pendry, the 1997 individual world champion, and other strong contenders on the team. Gill Hartley came third in the women's individual ratings.

In competition, pilots score cumulatively over a given number of flying days, by flying round courses set by the race organiser and a "pilot jury", according to the day's weather.

Both of the major accidents in this year's championships occurred in reasonable conditions. It will probably remain unclear exactly why they occurred, but one involved a mid-air collision between a Slovenian and a Swede, resulting in the death of the Slovenian. One day's flying later in the week was cancelled mid-race due to thunderstorms, which pose the ultimate threat to paragliders, sucking them upwards to almost certain destruction.

The competition is about distance and speed, with the day's cross-country "task" taking pilots round a circuit which can be 60 miles long or more. With 150 competitors in the European Championships, massed starts were spectacular both before and after take-off. Until moments before flying, the field

looks like a surfing scene on a mountain top, but the stakes are higher, the tattoos bigger and the hair longer. Colourful canopies cover most of the available flat ground while competitors maintain a seriously relaxed attitude. Then helmets and flying suits go on, wings rise into the sky in swarms, and spiral upwards in "gaggles" to around 12,000 feet or more; the pilots look even more laid back than when they are on the ground.

Each turn point of a course must be flown over and photographed before flying onwards. Competitors are timed into the goal field where they land, and results are known once pilots' films have been checked to establish that all of the turns were flown over in the correct order by the various finishers. Only about 30 per cent of the field made the goal each day - normal at this level of competition.

The recent accidents have brought a number of issues into focus: pilots pushing harder, and risking weather conditions they would normally avoid, have made incidents common. At last year's World Championships, also in Spain, more than 30 pilots were forced to resort to their reserve parachutes when they got into extreme difficulty. Most recreational pilots would expect never to use this last resort during the course of their flying career. Competitors also suffered large numbers of "minor" injuries - mainly broken arms and legs.

A major factor is the use of very high performance paragliders. These are so unstable that they leave little or no margin for surviving major turbulence which tends to occur around thermals. Essentially, the faster the wing, the more prone it is to collapse, even when flown by top pilots. The invisibility of the hazard adds to the threat; riding thermals is sometimes likened to canoeing down rapids without being able to see the water.

One of Britain's foremost pilots is Robbie Whittle, ex-hang-gliding and paragliding world champion who competes as well as designing and test-flying paragliders for a living. Moments before the start of day two's race, in which a Frenchman was badly injured, he gave his views on the competition: "You've got to race on the limit to be competitive. If you can use a wing which you think gives you an edge, you will. I'm really good, and over 150 of my flying hours each year are on prototype wings, but even I can get caught out - so what chance have some of the others got? Standardisation of the wings we compete on is essential."

He later saw the accident take place and is in no doubt that the pilot would have stayed aloft with a less twitchy wing. Though it's of relatively minor consequence, compared to the injuries, there's also the competitive aspect: "Flying similar

standard wings will make the racing better too," he continued. "At the moment it's a manufacturer's race."

Last month's fatality seems finally to have brought the issue to a head, with a proposal from some of the leading competitors to the sport's governing body that only certified wings be admitted in competition in time for next year's World Championships.

With the competitive side of paragliding looking for - and starting to receive - recognition, it deserves

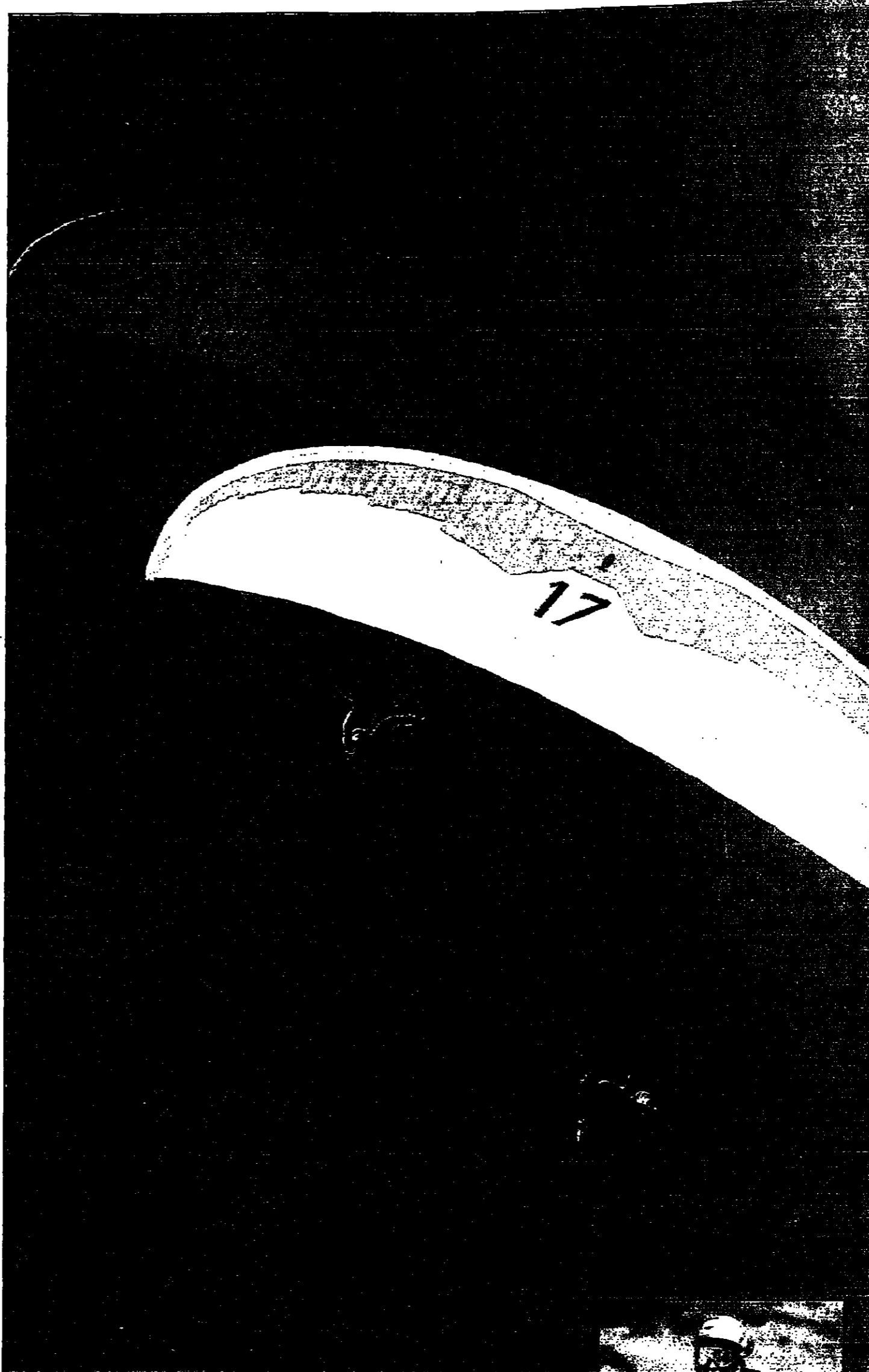
to become known for spectacular fun and thrilling races rather than for its disasters.

Small wonder that the drive for increased safety comes from the front line. It's a case of self-preservation and they know it: there are old pilots and there are bold pilots, but there are no old, bold pilots.

EUROPEAN PARAGLIDING CHAMPIONSHIPS
(Piedrahita, Spain, 1-4 August 1998)
Prizes: 1 P. Lutz (Swe) 3986 pts; 2 P. Lutz (Swe) 3985 pts; 3 P. Berod (Fra) 3984 pts; 4 C. Bernier (Fra) 2552 points; 2 C. Berod (Fra) 2344 pts; 3 G. Harvey (GB) 2282 pts; 4 J. Pendry (GB) 2270 pts; 5 J. Pendry (GB) 14167 pts; 6 France 14040 pts; 7 Austria 13383 pts; 8 Great Britain 13089 pts.

Riding thermals is sometimes likened to canoeing down rapids without being able to see water, but that is part of the lure for women's paragliding world cup holder, Claire Bernier (right), and also Patrick Berod (No 17, above).
David Wootton

Take-off at the European Championships David Wootton



Gebrselassie plays safe on Golden League bounty

PETER MARTIN on the Ethiopian star who has turned his back on record chasing

much dry, parched earth that you desperately need a Perrier break, and it's hard not to begin swatting the flies away from your forehead.

Gebrselassie's life story is full of the great paradoxes of the modern-day African track star. A country of legendary wealth under the Queen of Sheba, Ethiopia is the second poorest nation in the world. By the age of 25, and although he could not drive, Gebrselassie owned two Mercedes-Benz saloons yet remained a hero to the 51 million Ethiopians who try to exist on the country's average salary of just £30 a year.

His exact earnings are a closely-guarded trade secret, but Gebrselassie is probably the world's best paid athlete, commanding \$80,000 per race and earning in excess of \$1.5 million last season. Today he'll be hoping to break the bank in Monte Carlo, maintaining his claim on the \$1m bounty available to any athlete who goes through the seven-meet Golden League undefeated.

After the Games, the film crew spent four months in Asela, the small, mud-hut farming village where Gebrselassie grew up, and in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital. Now ready for an autumn release in America, according to one critic, who has seen a preview of the film, after about 30 minutes you've seen so

sisters. "You must act the way the people do," Gebrselassie says. "If my society is poor, I can't act rich. I have money, but I do not show it. I want to remain part of my people."

Perhaps it is Gebrselassie's need to save for the future which has seen him change his racing attitude this summer. In the past three years his rivalry with Kenya's Daniel Komen has rewritten the record books in a similar manner to when Coe and Ovett attacked the 800 metres and mile records nearly 20 years ago. But this summer Gebrselassie seems to have taken his foot off the gas.

"I was very afraid of that punishment," Gebrselassie says, "so I ran fast." At the end of the school day, to avoid being yelled at by his father as he waited for more help on the farm, Gebrselassie would run all the way home: his school books were always tucked under his arm.

Gebrselassie moves with great sensitivity between the opulence of the five-star hotels that accommodate the world's top athletes and the abject poverty of his homeland. "I live between the two worlds," he says. When in Addis Ababa, he lives simply, surrounded by brothers and

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Gebrselassie: Unbeaten so far

for a blistering finish to ensure first place. The \$1m jackpot seems too good a main chance to miss.

Monte Carlo today is just the third stop on the golden merry-go-round. Gebrselassie is one of eight athletes with 100 per cent records in the series so far, but performances in other major track meetings have been affected by the concentration on the Golden League. On Wednesday at Stockholm - not a Golden League event - Marion Jones pulled out, citing injury, while Jonathan Edwards also limped away. If either do not compete in their events today, the share of the jackpot for those remaining and winning will grow.

In a sport which probably only has four bankable world stars - Jones and Michael Johnson, Hicham El Guerrouj and Gebrselassie - there are even fewer athletes who can go the whole season unbeaten. Except, perhaps, Gebrselassie, and he has staked \$1m to prove he can.

Edwards ready to put injured left foot forward

JONATHAN EDWARDS, Britain's triple jump world record-holder, looks certain to compete here today at the annual Grand Prix meeting at the Stade Louis II. If he does, his whole season may be at stake, writes Peter Martin in Monte Carlo.

By competing, and risking aggravating the heel and ankle injuries suffered in Stockholm on Wednesday night, Edwards will be going against the advice of Linford Christie and Brendan Foster, who both counselled rest and recovery ahead of the championship challenges of the next month.

The heel injury on his left foot is similar to that which may have cost him his world title last year. The ankle on the same leg is badly swollen.

Edwards is Britain's best bet for a European gold medal in Budapest in 10 days' time. Yet if his injuries worsen by jumping this evening or in Zurich next Wednesday, the fear is that the former world champion may jeopardise his chances of claiming the European title which has so far eluded him.

His final jump on Wednesday -

16.99 metres, more than a metre short of his world record-breaking best - won the event by just 1cm, something Edwards described as "a minor miracle".

But in what Edwards, 32, has described as "a season of multiple challenges", he obviously also wants to maintain his 12-meeting unbeaten record, and his chance of scooping a share of the \$1m (£30,000) jackpot if he can win at all seven of the Golden League meetings. Edwards is one of eight athletes still in the hunt.

Others include Hicham El Guerrouj, who heads the field for the 1500 metres, and Frankie Fredericks in perhaps the most competitive event of the summer so far, the men's 100 metres.

Today, Fredericks will be racing against three men all in sub-10sec form in the past week: Ato Boldon, of Trinidad, and the Canadians Bruny Surin and Donovan Bailey. Bailey, the Olympic champion, has suffered a lean year, losing his world title, something which damaged his pride. As ever, when the gun goes, there will be more than money at stake.

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DRUGS IN SPORT

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MY LEAVES

TIME

De Bruin to challenge test methods

SWIMMING

By ALAN MURDOCH
in Dublin

MICHELLE DE BRUIN, the triple Olympic swimming champion, yesterday announced a head-on challenge to the four-year ban imposed on her for allegedly tampering with a urine sample she provided at her home in January this year.

The ban would effectively end the 23-year-old's competitive career. Her appeal will be heard before the Court for Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne in four to six weeks' time.

On Thursday, the international swimming federation, FINA, said tests on the sample, carried out at the approved laboratory in Barcelona, indicated it had been manipulated not by a tester but by the swimmer, although FINA said the manner of manipulation remained uncertain. The four-year suspension bars her from all national and international competitions.

In a spirited defence at a news conference she called here, De Bruin painted a picture of sports authorities en-

gaged in a "conspiracy" to find an athlete guilty of drug-taking in an effort to uphold their regulatory credentials.

She said she was convinced that FINA had made a concerted effort "to ensure that, by whatever method available to them, a ban was imposed." She said that punitive damages would be sought against FINA, accusing it of "a blatant and mischievous" attempt to ruin her career.

She added: "I think some of their [Final] rules are really a shambles, and they have to protect themselves and that could be why they have reacted in the way they did and why they may use me as a scapegoat."

De Bruin, flanked by her lawyer, Peter Lennon, and her husband, set out a barrage of technical and legal arguments that they claimed showed FINA's ruling to be flawed. She will challenge the reliability of the test sample seal, alleging it would pop open when placed in boiling water, and could have been tampered with later.

Her solicitor said doping control forms for the January tests were altered later and did not tally with the copies given to the swimmer; a discrepancy "of crucial importance" if testers' procedures were to be corroborated, he said.

Lennon said: "No one has produced any proof that Michelle has physically tampered with this sample, and that's what's required under the rule of law."

De Bruin's camp accuse FINA of breaching its own rule, putting a burden of proof on FINA where an athlete has not tested positive for a banned substance. More abstruse was Lennon's assertion that it was

under a cloud since she soared up the world rankings after linking up with the Dutchman in 1993 and then taking her gold medals at Atlanta.

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Lennon's assertion that it was

technically impossible for a sample with a specific gravity reading of 1.05, as shown in the sample provided by De Bruin, to have contained alcohol. The swimmer also said the Barcelona laboratory had used test methods not approved by the sport's authorities.

Later, a glimpse emerged of

the personal toll taken by the controversy. She said that when FINA's manipulation charges arrived at her home on 27 April, "my husband couldn't bring himself to tell me, and he collapsed in the house twice. When he finally told me I think I cried for two hours."

She flatly rejected suggestions that the marriage was under strain. "I know I have never done anything to put either myself or my family or my country to shame," she said. The Irish public in her home village and radio callers showed a sympathetic response, many noting no proof had emerged that she took any banned substance.

During two hours of media interrogation, she still managed a smile. Reminded of Bill Clinton's congratulations to her in 1996, she was asked if she had any tips for him in his present predicament.

She replied: "I wouldn't be qualified to offer him any advice."

PA

Michelle de Bruin launches her counter-attack against her ban at a news conference in Dublin



Hungry Hingis too strong for Kruger

TENNIS

MARTINA HINGIS, the defending champion and top seed, crushed South Africa's Joanne Kruger 6-1, 6-3 in 49 minutes on Thursday to reach the semi-finals of the Tashiba Classic in Carlsbad, California.

"I played her in Key Biscayne and it was quite easy," said Hingis, who beat Kruger 6-0, 6-0 in their only previous meeting five months ago. "She doesn't miss too much but she doesn't have as fast a game as Monica (Seles) or Lindsay (Davenport). It gives me enough time to get into a rhythm."

Hingis needed just 15 minutes to take the first set, but Kruger offered more resistance in the second. "Once you win the first set & 1, you kind of lose your concentration and try to make some stupid shots which sometimes don't work out," she said.

While Hingis moved into the semi-finals, the Americans Davenport and Venus Williams and France's Nathalie Tauziat reached the quarter-finals.

The Second-seeded Davenport, fresh from winning the Bank of the West title last week against Williams, beat her compatriot Lisa Raymond 6-1, 6-4 while third-seeded Williams defeated Chanda Rubin 6-3, 6-2. The eighth seed and Wimbledon runner-up, Tauziat, dismissed the American qualifier Amy Frazier 6-3, 3-6, 6-1.

Davenport did not play her best tennis against Raymond despite a straight-set victory. "I knew going in I hadn't lost to her before but she's a very dangerous player regardless of past results," said Davenport, who now has a 6-0 record against her rival.

■ Tim Henman was left frustrated as his third-round match with Spain's Albert Costa in the Du Maurier Open was washed out by rain in Toronto on Thursday. Only one match started before the downpour arrived as Russia's fourth seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov won his first three games against the American, Michael Washington.

TODAY'S NUMBER

30

The percentage increase in sales of season tickets for the 18 First Division football clubs in France, following the World Cup triumph.

Bradford and Leeds look to put season back on course

RUGBY LEAGUE

By DAVE HADFIELD

WHEN MATTHEW Elliott and his Bradford side were jeered off the field at Oldham last week it was the end of the honeymoon for Super League's most spectacular success story.

It was not just a case of natural disappointment after another defeat; it knocked a hole in the Bulls' philosophy that it is the experience that results. Bradford have made a better hand of promoting and marketing the game than any other club, but, as another commercial manager said recently: "If your team's crap, you don't sell a thing".

The Bulls aren't that bad yet but they badly need a home win tomorrow over Hull to get the bitter taste out of their mouths.

"It certainly wasn't my high point as a coach," said Elliott.

who has doubts over Paul Dear's shoulder injury and might promote his two new signings, Nathan McAvoy and Neil Harmon, to the starting team.

Leeds also need to get back on track after suffering their third defeat of the season at Castleford last week. Graham Murray has worries over Marc Glanville and Paul Sterling but should have an easier task in his starting line-up. He is also likely to reshuffle his half-backs after expressing disappointment with Lesley Harris and Graham Holroyd in those roles last week.

Their opponents Salford are likely to give a debut to their new Australian, Shane Kenward, even though his delayed flight arrived yesterday morning.

St Helens are likely to be unchanged at Warrington, who have major problems at full-back with Lee Penny carrying an ankle injury and his replacement last week, Dave

Highton, out with a damaged foot. Their veteran winger, Mark Forster, returns after suspension.

Arguably the biggest game of the weekend, in terms of the sport's long-term development, is in the unlikely setting of Cheltenham today, where the South Norfolk Saints and the Crawley Jets meet in the first Grand Final of the Rugby League Conference.

Thetford (the home of the Saints) and Crawley are two towns where the game has thrived this year. The Saints, however, have failed in an attempt to have the match postponed. One of their forwards, Micky Byrne, is getting married and three other players will also be missing because of the wedding.

That gives Crawley – an amalgam of students, teachers and workers at Gatwick Airport – the chance to become the first winners of the Harry Jepson

Trophy, and to claim a place in next season's Challenge Cup.

Their inspiration is Rod Hammond, a Kiwi who has broken off from travelling the world to play for them this season, and there will be three coach-loads of their supporters in Cheltenham to see whether they can take advantage of the Saints' fixture clash.

■ The Rugby Football League has affirmed that this autumn's Test series against New Zealand will go ahead as planned. Doubts were raised by the New Zealand RL president, Gerald Ryan, who is angry that several Super League clubs are set to prevent English-based Kiwi playing in two Tests against Australia on the eve of the British series. That would contravene international rules but representatives from all the major rugby league-playing nations are hoping to work out a solution at a meeting in Sydney later this month.

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Highton, out with a damaged foot. Their veteran winger, Mark Forster, returns after suspension.

Holyfield to shake off the rust in title defence against Bean

BOXING

EVANDER HOLYFIELD sets the ball rolling on a week of heavyweight collisions when he defends the International Boxing Federation title on 19 September against the top-ranked contender Vaughan Bean in Atlanta.

Holyfield, who will be making his first appearance in the ring since November, also holds the World Boxing Association version of the title, but will not put it on the line again against Bean at the Georgia Dome in Holyfield's home town.

The champion had been scheduled to climb back into the ring in June against Britain's Henry Akinwande but that fight was called off after the challenger withdrew when tests revealed he had hepatitis.

Holyfield will be the overwhelming favourite to retain his IBF crown after two victories over the shamed Mike Tyson, who is still waiting for a decision from the Athletic Control Board in New Jersey to have his licence

reversed following a one-year ban for biting Holyfield's ear.

Holyfield's last defence was against Michael Moore; Bean has won 28 of his 30 professional fights but is not expected to present the champion with too many problems.

Holyfield's fight will take place seven days before Lennox Lewis defends the WBC version against Croatia's Zeljko Mavrovic in Connecticut and Herbie Hide's mandatory WBO heavyweight title defence against Germany's Willi Fischer in the Norwich Sport Village.

Members of the state Athletic Control Board have refused to say when they'll make a decision on whether to award a boxing licence to Tyson.

After emerging from a three-hour private session at the Richard J Hughes Justice Complex on Thursday night, boxing commissioner Larry Hazzard offered "no comment" several times to questions regarding a decision.

Tyson, 32, has not fought

since the ear-biting incident in June 1997. Nevada regulators revoked his boxing licence and said he could reapply after one year, but Tyson opted to apply for a licence in New Jersey instead.

Hazzard, board chairman Gerald Gormley and board member Gary Shaw reviewed Tyson's application and deliberated during the 10am to 1pm closed-door meeting, said Paul Lockett, the spokesman for the attorney general's office.

The three also reviewed written testimony from the public for and against Tyson and sought legal advice from assistant attorney general Michael Haas, who participated in the executive session.

Mark Juliano, president and CEO of Caesars Atlantic City, said that awarding Tyson a licence could have a tremendous financial impact on Atlantic City. "It would probably depend on who he fought but generally a heavyweight championship fight is the biggest draw that we do," he said.

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RUGBY LEAGUE

INTERNATIONAL PREMIERSHIP (Round 22) Match 20 Cronulla 1D; Adelaide XI 1; Canberra 1C.

RUGBY LEAGUE

The European Cup and European Shield tournaments will now kick-off on 19 September, following the decision of French clubs to play after all. Cardiff and Swansea are expected to follow suit, and with support for an alternative competition collapsing, English clubs must now decide whether to reconsider their decision not to take part.

SNOOKER

LIVERPOOL VICTORIA UK CHAMPIONSHIP (Premiership) First qualifying round (19 Aug) - 1st round: C. Price (Den) vs. P. Stenner (Swe); 2nd round: D. Higgins (Eng) vs. D. McClelland (Eng); 3rd round: G. Doherty (Nir) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 4th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. O'Brien (Eng); 5th round: D. Ellsworth (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 6th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 7th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 8th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 9th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 10th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 11th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 12th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 13th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 14th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 15th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 16th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 17th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 18th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 19th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 20th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 21st round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 22nd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 23rd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 24th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 25th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 26th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 27th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 28th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 29th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 30th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 31st round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 32nd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 33rd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 34th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 35th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 36th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 37th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 38th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 39th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 40th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 41st round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 42nd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 43rd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 44th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 45th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 46th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 47th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 48th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 49th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 50th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 51st round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 52nd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 53rd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 54th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 55th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 56th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 57th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 58th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 59th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 60th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 61st round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 62nd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 63rd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 64th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 65th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 66th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 67th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 68th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 69th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 70th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 71st round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 72nd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 73rd round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 74th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 75th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 76th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. Carter (Eng); 77th round: J. Higgins (Eng) vs. J. King (Eng); 78th round: J. Higgins

Overcome by fear of the drop



HENRY BLOFELD

AT HEADINGLEY

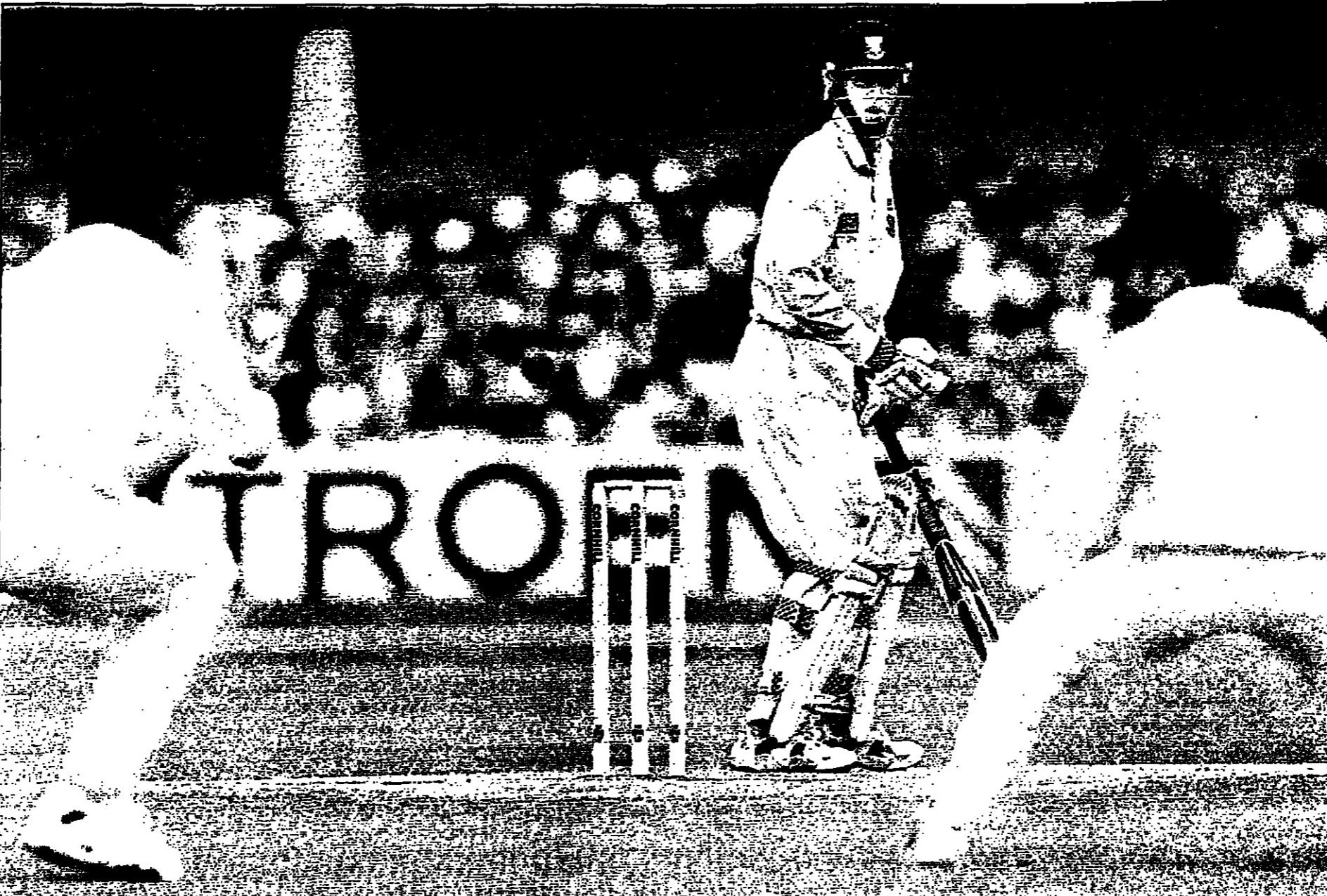
IN MID-AFTERNOON England dropped three catches in the space of 22 balls. In any Test match, let alone one of this importance, this is a horrifying statistic and it was not helped when a fiendishly difficult chance was dropped by Alec Stewart, diving in front of slip soon after tea when his opposite number, Hanuse Cronje, was on 32. Cronje had been dropped earlier – one of the hat-trick – when he bowled.

Is it just a coincidence that these catches went down in a most unattractive rash, or is it a symptom of a wider malaise and, if so, what? England had stuck to their task well, even if the ball didn't always stick in the fielders' hands, and had every reason to think they might even gain a small first-innings lead.

Jonty Rhodes, who made an important 37 in 39 balls which helped lift the pressure off South Africa at a crucial stage, and Cronje were dropped twice in all. Rhodes always gave the bowlers a chance by the way he went for his strokes and he was likely to get himself out, but he is a dangerous man and, for England's well-being, his end could not come too soon.

Cronje is a different problem and it always needs a craftily placed depth-charge to dispose of him. While he is still around, South Africa know that all is not lost. It goes without saying that the cricket was tense and vibrant on an overcast day and in conditions which were never easy for batting.

This hat-trick of catches that went down in those 22 balls had



Gerhardus Liebenberg, the South African opening batsman, edges into the waiting hands of Graeme Hick at Headingley yesterday

David Ashdown

one interesting feature in common: they were all dropped by players who are not wholly sure of keeping their place in the side. Mark Ramprakash missed one above his head at square leg when Rhodes pulled at a Darren Gough delivery, having taken a much harder one just before.

Graeme Hick was the culprit at second slip when, one run

later, Rhodes played forward to Dominic Cork and found the edge – it was not the hardest of chances. The first of the three, and the most important of all, had been put down at third slip by Nasser Hussain when Cronje drove at Cork. The ball travelled quickly but it was straightforward enough.

Hick's place in the side is in obvious jeopardy unless he

does something remarkable in the second innings. Ramprakash, on the other hand, is more secure but he is still not scoring the weight of runs he should, and those that he does are teeming with insecurity.

It may seem wrong to suggest that Hussain, the vice-captain these past two years, does not have a secure place, and that is probably true. Nonetheless, in

among his big innings, he makes far too many low scores, and this can only whittle away at a man's confidence.

In the short term, Hussain is

more in danger of losing his position at No 3 in the batting order than his place in the side.

It would be surprising, all the

same, if his lack of consistency

is not playing on his mind. All

three of these players – whose

main job is to score runs – will be eager to impress, appreciative of more failures.

All three dropped important

catches. Was this also coincidental, or was it that they were guilty of trying too hard?

Perhaps they were so eager to

impress that it affected their

focus on the moment, or did the

fear of failure raise its head in

the split-second between the

ball leaving the bat and going to hand?

The fact that Ramprakash held a stammerer at mid-wicket and Hick a good one earlier on may be thought to explode this theory before it even gets off the ground. But why do good, reliable and brilliant fielders with outstanding pairs of hands drop catches like this when they really matter?

David Goodchild, only recently preferred to Yorkshireman Richard Kettleborough at the top of the Middlesex order, joined forces with the Australian left-hander, Justin Langer, in making a better fist of the second innings. Goodchild, a correct, tall batsman, recently made a century against Sri Lanka, and followed this with another mature effort yesterday. The opening partnership ended somewhat mysteriously, Langer remaining in his crease while Warwickshire celebrated a delivery from Giles, until he realised that after padding up outside off stump, the ball had cruelly whirled into the wicket. Mike Gatting then joined Goodchild in an attempt to nurse the

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Giggs targets the cream of Europe

Old Trafford's Welsh wonder is ready to take the Champions' League by storm, after a frustrating summer watching his mates show off in France.

By Glenn Moore

LIKE MARIO Kempes, Paolo Rossi and Maradona before them, Zinedine Zidane and Marcel Desailly confirmed their niche in the game's history this summer, performing with distinction at the highest level of all.

It is, George Best recently told his authorised biographer, a source of "enduring regret" that he never had the opportunity to do the same. One of the better pretenders to the Ulsterman's Old Trafford crown knows the feeling. While this weekend's resumption of hostilities, just 26 days since the French celebrated on the Champs-Elysées, may be too soon for some, Ryan Giggs cannot wait to start.

The nearest Giggs came to the World Cup was some PR work for Reebok in Paris during the tournament. Promoting boots is not quite the same as using them but, at just 24, it already appears this will be as close as he will get to the game's premier tournament. Bobby Gould may claim he saw "fear" in his opposing managers' eyes when Wales were drawn with Denmark and Italy in qualifying for Euro 2000, but the reality is that the Principality is unlikely to reach a major tournament ever again. Like Best, Giggs will have to be content with showing his greatness on the club stage.

"It is disappointing to miss out," said Giggs when we met. "Obviously every footballer wants to play in the World Cup and I'm no different. It is just something I have to come to terms with. It's going to be difficult for Wales. I hope that we get there some day, but with the qualifying system as it is we always get two hard teams in the group."

Giggs, who confirmed that despite playing for England schools he was never eligible for the England team, starts his season at Wembley in the Charity Shield tomorrow. Then, on Wednesday, Manchester United are due to open their Champions' League campaign.

As it did with Best, Europe provides Giggs' main chance of making a permanent mark on the game. "I always look forward to playing in Europe," he said. "It does have similarities to playing for your country, you face opposition from different countries. It is odd having to qualify for the league stage, we are so used to being champions."

Does it devalue the tournament? "If we get to the semi again, we won't be thinking about having had to qualify."

This season offers extra motivation



'It is disappointing to miss out on the World Cup, but I always look forward to playing in Europe... if we get to the semi again we won't be thinking about having had to qualify'

Allsport

for Giggs with the arrival of Jesper Blomqvist from Milan. The Swedish international offers the first competition for Giggs' place on the left-wing since Lee Sharpe's best years. It has been mooted that Giggs will be given a different role to accommodate Blomqvist, but Giggs is in no mood to move.

"My favourite position is still left wing," said Giggs. "My main asset is running at people and it gives me the opportunity to do that. You can get isolated, but at United we've always played 4-4-2 and given the wingers, whether me and Andrei Kanchelskis or me and Becks [David Beckham], plenty of service."

"I do enjoy playing midfield as you do get more involved, and I can play up front. When I first came to United I'd always played left wing, then they played me up front and I played there most of the time in the youth team. Playing in different positions gives you an extra dimension, but I don't think I'll go as far as playing at the back. I wouldn't want to mark Duncan Ferguson."

One of the crucial injuries was the hamstring problem suffered by

A third motivation for Giggs, and his team-mates, is the sour memory of their empty-handed season. Already something of an elder statesman at United, he is one of just three players (along with Peter Schmeichel and Denis Irwin) from 1991-92 when United lost the championship to Leeds. Alex Ferguson regards that disappointment as the making of the subsequent years of plenty and Giggs believes last season will have a similar effect – just as the barren 1994-95 season was followed by a second double.

"The manager always says you need disappointments, it makes you a better player. It was certainly the case after Leeds. Some of the young lads in the team have never lost before and I think they'll come back stronger players."

"He had injuries last year but just didn't win enough games. Arsenal's run at the end of the season was exceptional. I would watch their games on television and think 'they'll skip up this time but they never did.'

One of the crucial injuries was the hamstring problem suffered by

Giggs against Derby just before the European semi. The irony was that it ended his first season of full fitness in several years and he was in rampant form. "I was flying," he recalled. "It was so disappointing to get injured at such an important stage."

Giggs' end-of-season mood was not helped by various tabloid allegations about his personal life which have continued during the summer; though he is currently in a settled relationship. Such is football's profile, this intrusive attention now goes with the territory, and Giggs has reluctantly learned to live with it.

"It doesn't affect my life now, but at 18 it was difficult to come to terms with. The thing I found difficult was people writing stuff about your love life and family. You wonder why but you get used to it. I know where to go now, where you get hassled, where not."

Several of Giggs' partners have been high-profile themselves, like Danni Behr. Other examples are Beckham's relationship with "Posh Spice", Victoria Adams, and Jamie Redknapp's marriage to another

pop singer, Louise. Other young stars, like Owen and Paul Scholes, are with former schoolfriends who knew them before they were famous.

"It's about trust," said Giggs. "It is difficult to meet partners and you can see why sometimes girlfriends are also famous. You know they are not after you for anything and you are both used to the attention. So many girls out there are just money-grabbers, so you've got to be care-

ful."

"My friends are people who I used to go to school with, people I've known since I was nine or 10. It helps that I've grown up in the area. I've never moved [his new house is in north Manchester; near his mother, rather than in the traditional Cheshire footballer belt] or changed my lifestyle."

"His contentment and the rise of the Premiership means a move abroad is unlikely. "You don't need to know a few years ago Italy was the place to go, but now there are teams in the Premiership quite capable of winning European trophies. I'm at a big club with lots of good young

players, why move?" United's own attempt to strengthen the side has Blomqvist apart – founded. This is perceived as being partly through Ferguson's reluctance to break the wage structure. Would Giggs have wanted parity if a Batistuta, Klinsmann or Salas had come in on huge wages. "I'm not bothered what anybody else is earning, as long as you are happy, that's it. Besides, a lot of stuff in the papers is exaggerated."

This may well be true. Giggs has

a number of endorsements but re-

tains an agent of the old school and a level head. He can be a challenging interviewee because he's done it so often and, not being garrulous by nature, gives little away.

But after a while he does relax,

laughing self-consciously at the sug-

gestion that he might have done the

restoration of his new house himself

and more wryly when asked if he

had failed as a footballer, he would re-

ally be a flower seller on the Cardiff

bypass, as his boots' adverts suggest.

While on the subject [the inter-

view has, after all, been set up by

Reebok, which is the only way you

get 30 minutes with a star as high

in the football firmament as Giggs

these days] he stresses the right

boots do make a difference though

they will not, he adds with a pitying

look, turn a bad player into a good

one. His biggest weakness, he says,

is his finishing, which few would dis-

agree with. As a person it is that he

gets bored easily though, with age,

he has become more patient and

take things in my stride more than

I used to."

His strengths on the field are obvi-

ously – quick feet, good balance and

pace. There is another, equally impor-

tant facet. "Look at his work-

rate," notes Terry Venables. "With

his talent he could be one of those

players who just stands around, but

he knows that way he will not win

things. The work he puts in is fan-

tastic. What a great example to

young players."

And so to this season. Said Giggs:

"Arsenal will be our main chal-

lengers and Chelsea have made

some good signings – but we know

if we play to our capabilities we could

win it easily."

Arsenal's taste of home begins with charity

IN THE age of the £40,000-a-week wage, the Football Association might be better served just passing the collection plate around the dressing-rooms of the Premiership and asking for some loose change when it comes to raising money for charity but, as ever, it is the poor bloody terrace infantry who will be dipping into their pockets to assist a variety of worthy causes at Wembley tomorrow.

Despite a growing familiarity with the ground, a relative absence of big new signings, and live television coverage, the fans of Arsenal

and Manchester United will be out in numbers at the Charity Shield, with close to 70,000 expected. Patrick Kluivert may have eluded both sides for now but each side will unveil World Cup debutants, Arsenal having the added attraction of two players who actually won France 98 while United will produce the long-awaited return of Roy Keane.

The focus of attention will, however, be a player with mixed memories of France 98: David Beckham. If he plays it will be his first appearance on English soil since his

dismissal in St Etienne. Even if he does not – and he has an ankle injury – the reaction of the Arsenal fans towards him will still be watched closely.

For Arsène Wenger, the Arsenal manager, the match gives his players another chance to acquaint themselves with their new European home – Arsenal are to play their

Champions' League games at Wembley – and to put one over their most dangerous rivals.

Wenger said yesterday: "The match is important as it is an honour and because it is against Manchester United. A win will give us confidence going into the season."

Nelson Vivas, the Argentine defender recently signed from Lugano,

is expected to play some part, though Wenger stressed he was not intended to be an instant replacement for either Lee Dixon or Nigel Winterburn. Jesper Blomqvist from Parma, is unfit, but Manchester United's other summer signing, the 21st Dutch defender Jaap Stam, will play.

For Arsenal's World Cup winners, the match comes exactly four weeks after their triumph in the Stade de France, but Emmanuel Petit said: "I'm not tired, when you are winning you keep wanting to

keep on winning. It would be different if we had lost to Brazil in the final. What may be a problem is in six months' time for myself. Patrick [Viera] and the other players from the World Cup. There has not been long to recover and with the Champions' League we will be playing every three or four days."

Tonight's match itself is unlikely to be revealing, especially as United will have one eye on Wednesday's Champions' League second qualifying round first-leg tie against LKS Lodz – assuming the Poles es-

cape a Fifa ban. Yet there should be an edge. This is United's fifth appearance in six years – last season they beat Chelsea on penalties – which, with £1m raised each match, might put their fans second only to the National Lottery board in charitable largesse. But, after last year's failures, neither fans, nor players, intend to give anything else away.

No tickets will be available at Wembley tomorrow, but Manchester United will be selling to personal callers today. Arsenal have sold their allocation.

Wembley hosts the Highbury faithful for the first of many games. By Glenn Moore

Champions' League games at Wembley – and to put one over their most dangerous rivals.

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Happy French return to reality

FRENCH FOOTBALL BY TOM ROSS

FOOTBALL

AKA FA CUP SHIELD

Arsenal v Manchester Utd (1.0) ... (at Wembley Stadium)

NATIONWIDE FOOTBALL LEAGUE

FIRST DIVISION

Stoke v Ipswich (4.0) ...

FRIENDLY MATCHES (not on pools coupon): Coventry City v Espanyol; Manchester City v Juventus; Manchester Utd v Atletico Madrid; Dundee Utd v Sterling (4.0) ...

36 Livingston v Dunfermline (3.0) ...

37 East Fife v Motherwell (3.0) ...

38 Morton v Ross County (3.0) ...

39 Inverness CT v Aberdeen (3.0) ...

40 Ralph v Clydebank (3.0) ...

41 St Johnstone v Stranraer (3.0) ...

42 St Mirren v Ayr (3.0) ...

43 Stevenage v Alloa (3.0) ...

44 Aldershot v Kilmarnock (3.0) ...

45 Bradford City v Plymouth (3.0) ...

46 Bristol City v Walsall (3.0) ...

47 Colchester Utd v Liverpool (3.0) ...

48 St Albans v Stevenage (3.0) ...

49 Shrewsbury v Southport (3.0) ...

50 Yeovil v Weymouth (3.0) ...

51 Scunthorpe Utd v Chesterfield (3.0) ...

52 Gillingham v Walsall (3.0) ...

53 Macclesfield v Fulham (3.0) ...

54 Manchester City v Stockport (3.0) ...

55 Peterborough v Halifax (3.0) ...

WEEKEND REVIEW

COMMENT • FEATURES • ARTS • SHOPPING • TRAVEL



Reuters

Great walls of fire

It's high season for forest fires. And across the United States and the Mediterranean thousands of men and women and their high-tech equipment are ready to go to blazes

BY ANDREW MARSHALL



Where's the fire? Smokejumpers in the United States

Woody Grantham is on his way to the South of France. The dry, hot summer on the Riviera attracts many of his fellow Americans every year in search of sun, but Woody's interests are a little different. He is in search of fire. He and his colleagues are making the trans-Atlantic trip in a C-130 Hercules firefighting aircraft which will spend the summer waiting for forest fires to break out in the parched, lavender-scented hills above the Mediterranean. The fires in Florida may be dying away, but this is just the start of the most dangerous part of the year for firewatchers around the world.

July and August are peak season for fires in the American West, where the worst wildland blazes claim thousands of acres of forest every year. In the Mediterranean, Greece and Italy are already fighting heavy fires and there will be more. So Mr Grantham's company, International Air Response, is taking its act on the road for the summer, hopping in their C-130 from Arizona to Detroit to clear customs, then on to Gander in Canada, the Azores and finally Marseilles.

The US has a century of experience in dealing with wildfire, and it exports that expertise around the world. America is an elemental country with destructive whirlwinds, epic earthquakes and torrential floods, and its fires come on the same scale. Norman McLean describes a wildfire out of control in "Young Men and Fire", the classic book on the subject. "Viewing total conflagration is literally blinding, as sight becomes sound and the roar of the fire goes out of the head of the gulch and away and beyond, far away," he writes. "You hear the roar of the fire as a roar of an animal without the animal or as an attacking army blown up by the explosion of its own ammunition dump."

In the past month over 2,000 fires in Florida incinerated half a million acres, drawing in 6,000 firefighters from 44 states. But by the standards of the vast infernos that sweep the great forests of the West, this is not exceptional. The 1988 fires which devastated Yellowstone Park, started by a June lightning strike, were only extinguished when snow fell three months later. Nearly 40 per cent of the 2.2 million acre park burned, and the bill for damage came to \$111m. In 1996, the worst year in recent history, 7 million acres were burnt across the nation.

The US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the state

firefighters are ready and waiting for the onset of fire in wilderness areas, with a network of fire lookouts and aerial patrols. As soon as smoke is spotted they pour manpower and resources into the initial attack, in an effort to put out the fire before it becomes uncontrollable. In the most remote areas, the first on the scene will be the Smokejumpers, an elite force of young men and women who parachute in to tackle the fire in its earliest stages.

"We are the initial attack forces," says Dave Mueller, a Smokejumper from Boise, Idaho. "Most of the fires we deal with you will never hear about." He and his colleagues are equipped with protective gear and basic tools, including the pulaski, a combined axe and shovel. This is not work for the timid. Sometimes the Smokejumpers follow storms in their aircraft, waiting for the lightning to strike and start fires, and then parachute down to extinguish them.

After the Smokejumpers come the engines, accompanied by tractor ploughs and bulldozers to build or widen firebreaks, and giant air tankers to control the spread of the blaze. The aircraft fly in at 150-200ft, high enough to feel the heat. "It's usually hot anyway, around 100 degrees, so you're kind of hot no matter what," says Ron Hunter of Aero Union Corporation, a company that operates air tankers. The heat produces unpredictable turbulence, so it is far from a smooth ride.

"Whenever you're around a forest fire, it gets kind of bumpy," he says. The planes fly to the side of the fire, dropping their liquid load to prevent it spreading and help the firefighters on the ground to get the blaze under control. They use a mixture of water and a fire retardant like ammonium nitrate, a fertiliser, mixed with a gum thickener that helps the liquid stick to trees. "Water on its own is no use," says Mr Grantham.

"The fire can feed off the oxygen in it." Many of the firefighting aircraft are museum pieces, chunky radial-engined workhorses from the great days of aviation like the DC-4s and C-54s – planes that flew in the Berlin airlift 50 years ago. Some of the planes, ironically, are the same types that once dropped napalm or defoliants to deforest the highlands of Vietnam. But the Forest Service has said it wants the fleet upgraded, and aims to have all of the aircraft turbine-powered by 2002. Increasingly the firefighters are using C-130 Hercules, an ageing aircraft but still the main transport used by most western air forces, and P-3 Orions; maritime patrol aircraft. One group wants to convert A-10 Warthogs, the ugly, stubby-winged but brutally

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RAVE

JULY 1998



In the sixth of our series on car boot sales, the best pitches are claimed early on a Sunday morning at Flixton, Suffolk, by car booters

Brian Harris

Casualties of secrecy

Sir: Ex-MI5 employee David Shayler's recent well-publicised revelations concerning the security service's alleged involvement in attempts to assassinate Colonel Gaddafi will not, I hope, deflect attention away from what he has been saying about the information received by MI5 prior to the bombings in London at the Israeli Embassy and Balfour House in 1994 ("Shayler: the unanswered questions", 4 August).

In December 1996, Jawad Botmeh and Samar Alami, both Palestinian, were found guilty at the Old Bailey of being involved in those bombings. They were sentenced to 20 years in prison but have always protested their innocence. Even the judge accepted that they were not members of any terrorist organisation and he also stated that most of the circumstances of the case remained unexplained. Neither was alleged to have actually planted the bombs.

Now Mr Shayler says that MI5 was in receipt of enough information before the bombings to have prevented them. So, one would have thought, it was clearly in the interest of justice that this information be revealed. But the Government has obtained injunctions to prevent any details of what Mr Shayler knows being made public. And its Crown Prosecution Service are applying, through privately held public-interest immunity hearings, to have withheld from Mr Botmeh and Ms Alami and their lawyers all the information that Mr Shayler says MI5 has about the bombings.

The human consequences of this refusal to be open with such potentially crucial information are disgraceful and immense. Mr Botmeh and Ms Alami rot away in prison while this country's government and justice system do their best to keep from them information upon which their chances of freedom may depend.

DANIEL GUEDELLA
London N16

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post comments to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2056 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk
E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity

Religious truths

Sir: Despite the collective prayer power of the dense ranks of bishops, the outcome on homosexuality is divided, bitter and unconvincing ("Hardline bishops ban gay priests", 6 August). Establishment religion claims its own privileged access to truth but, clearly, the outcome has had more to do with oratory, regional traditionalism, ethnic prejudices and an unwillingness to upset the faithful. The lessons are clear: Yet again, access to God and the religious truth has turned out to be more elusive and problematical than many religionists would have us believe. The losers are the self-confident purveyors of religious certainties – biblical literalists, evangelical populists and theological authoritarians.

Whatever may be said about homosexuality, the case for liberal religion has again been strengthened.

MILES HOWARTH
Chelmsford, Essex

Sir: I can well understand why Clare Garner described the Lambeth bishops' resolution on sexuality as "hardline". But its wording appears, within its own terms, positive.

Discussion of homosexuality within the Church of England now seems more rather than less important.

Lay people need to be convinced – not just told – of the truth of Christian teaching. And the pro-gay community, outvoted at Lambeth but believing itself in the ascendancy nationally, needs to be engaged constructively. Such intra-faith debate will be assisted by Lambeth's avoidance of ambiguity.

G L E LOCKE
Stoke-On-Trent, Staffordshire

Sir: The Anglican bishops in Nigeria say that Christians' acceptance of homosexuality would mean evangelical suicide in Africa. I must say that Bishop Chukwuma's notions about demons, gay or otherwise, do nothing to help my evangelistic efforts in Knightsbridge. They merely confirm most peoples' idea that Christianity has long since ceased to be credible.

Leaving aside homosexual behaviour, however: I wonder what proportion of Anglicans really believe that non-adulterous sexual relations outside marriage are wrong? About the same proportion as Catholics who believe contraception is a sin, I think.

This means either that the church has a massive programme of re-education on sexual morality to undertake; or, as a parishioner said to me yesterday, the majority of the gentleman in purple inhabit a universe of their own making.

THE REV NEIL DAWSON
London SW9

Sir: So genetically modified food can be kept out of the House of Commons restaurant ("Eco-warriors destroy field of genetically engineered crops", 5 August) but not out of the high street. Now I understand – the electorate is the study group, MPs are the controls!

SIR MARIC
Sheffield

Sir: I was recently asked by an incredulous Canadian visitor whether it was true that everyone in England dealt with their snail problem by lobbing them into next-door's garden. I have taken a straw poll among my

Nursing ambitions

Sir: With reference to your report "Alarm at shortage of new nurses" (5 August), my 22-year-old daughter returned from working abroad in January and decided she wanted to become a nurse.

Our local hospital had an open day to recruit nurses. There was a large empty room with a few leaflets and two people to talk to. They agreed my daughter was ideally qualified but did not have any application forms and sent her upstairs. She was informed that she had to apply through NMAS and was given a telephone number. When telephoned, NMAS informed her that, as it was after December, she had to apply to the institution direct. She recontacted the hospital who said they would put her on the waiting list for the application form. The form arrived two months later. My daughter filled it in and returned it. Some time later she received a reply

from the university running the course to say that they were not recruiting until the year 2000.

Wisely, she had not relied on this hospital and during January and February had obtained and returned about eight other application forms direct to nursing colleges and hospitals. One college carefully followed up all her references and then wrote to inform her that funding had been withdrawn from the course. Another posted a letter on a Tuesday, which arrived on Thursday, expecting her to attend an interview at 9am on Thursday some distance away. However, she persevered and by March she had been interviewed by a London hospital and was delighted to be given a place.

The saga continued. In July a letter came from one of the other hospitals she had contacted five months previously asking her to an interview for a place in September. When she telephoned to decline

they admitted they had taken a long time over the applications.

The hospital that has now accepted her was also slow in replying to her initial application. Mind you, it had a really good excuse – it had been waiting to find out if it was going to be closed down!

WENDY KRESS
Great Missenden,
Buckinghamshire

It isn't cricket

Sir: In 1960 I took a "catch" at first slip like the one that dismissed Ramprakash at Headingly on Thursday. I was a capped player representing my West Riding school against other local rivals.

I appealed instinctively and instantly. The umpire signalled out. Sir, I lost, in spite of my appeal, I had not caught the ball before it had grounded. I told the umpire. He recalled the batsman.

To this day, I am proud of that decision to play fair. To my grave, I will recall the excitement of fairly catching out the same batsman three overs later with what was for me, a remarkable athleticism.

In those days we kept the game alive because we played the game in the spirit of the game.

What is the point of today's competitions when the players don't care if the rules are observed and are party to the flouting of cricket's unique ethics? Don't professional "sportsmen" of all codes realise that they are responsible for the contempt in which most people hold professional "sport". Let's be honest and bring back the gladiatorial "games" of the imperial Rome.

TERRY MARSTON
Barbican, London EC2

Salt water and tears

Sir: While I am intrigued by the possible transformation of insular Lincolnshire with Lincoln as an isthmus town, I was dismayed to read your account of the Agriculture Select Committee's report and the wildlife lobby's welcome for its "Let the coastline flood" policy (6 August).

With respect to the massive potential body of inland water between Nottinghamshire, Doncaster and the Humber, the outcome of a "do nothing" policy is likely to be a mess rather than a wilderness. If the sea is allowed to invade, not only will several hundred kilometres of new coastline be created and commensurate coastal defences be required, but the area could become a saltwater swamp as urban, agricultural and industrial pollutants from the region's major rivers accumulate behind the tidal ebb and flow of the Humber.

Constructing a barrage across the Humber might protect existing habitats, enabling the creation of a non-tidal freshwater "lake", rather than a brackish "sound", alongside the usual benefits of energy generation and transport. But, to enjoy such choices, zero tolerance of water pollution from all sources, in particular agricultural chemicals, would be essential.

JOHN CLARK
Berlin

Be brave, be bold

Sir: As the author of 16 children's books, may I say that I found Virginia Ironside's "advice" to the would-be children's author harsh (Dilemmas, 6 August). Whenever people ask my advice about becoming a journalist or an author I tell them, yes, it's tough on the street and you have to study the market, know the form, and prepare yourself for disappointment. But I also make a point of invoking Goethe's sublime statement of encouragement:

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now."

BEL MOONEY
Lansdown, Somerset

Going for the burn to save the forests

continued from page 1
effective ground attack planes that made their name in the deserts of Iraq. In these post-Cold War days, you can even hire Russian Iluyshins, part of a 600-strong fleet that the now-private company has put on the market.

America's war on fire goes back almost a century, and the country turned to aircraft as early as the Twenties in an effort to reach distant conflagrations deep in the forest. It now has a fast, high-technology armory to deploy in an emergency. California, for example, has 16 800-gallon air tankers of its own, three massive 2,000-gallon private contract tankers, 11 helicopters and 13 light planes. It can appeal to neighbouring states, to the region, and then nationally for assistance, through the National Interagency Fire Centre in Boise. It can bring in people and machines from across the nation, from Canada, from the National Guard and the armed services.

Yet the fires of 1996 stretched even these resources to breaking point. They started in January in the south and did not burn out until October. At the height of the blazes, in August, more than 21,000 civilian and National Guard fire-fighters were on duty with Marine and Army battalions. There is something desperately romantic about the combination of fire and human endeavour. Flying the tankers is heroic work, though the men who do it say that they are not scared. Charles Bushey, a Montana fire-fighter, estimates that 136 tanker pilots have lost their lives in the last 50 years. The fire jumpers also face huge

odds. One incident – the 1949 Mann Gulch fire, in which 13 jumpers lost their lives – inspired both a feature film, *Red Skies of Montana*, and Norman McLean's book. He describes the unique *esprit de corps* that binds jumpers together: these "tough young guys, pointed towards the woods for life". He writes of their "sense of belonging to a highly select outfit, somewhat like the Marines, who know what they are talking about when they speak of themselves as the proud and the few."

It can be terrifying but "the excitement outweighs the danger", says Mr Mueller, who counts a broken back amongst his injuries. At 37, he is one of the oldest Smokejumpers, and says he will give it another two years. "But then, I said that two years ago," he says sheepishly.

This Herculean effort, and its romantic image, has its critics. The massive assault that the US has launched on fire is deeply intertwined with the greater urge to control nature, and with an emphasis on military technology and military methods, writes Professor Stephen J Pyne, one of the foremost authorities on the subject.

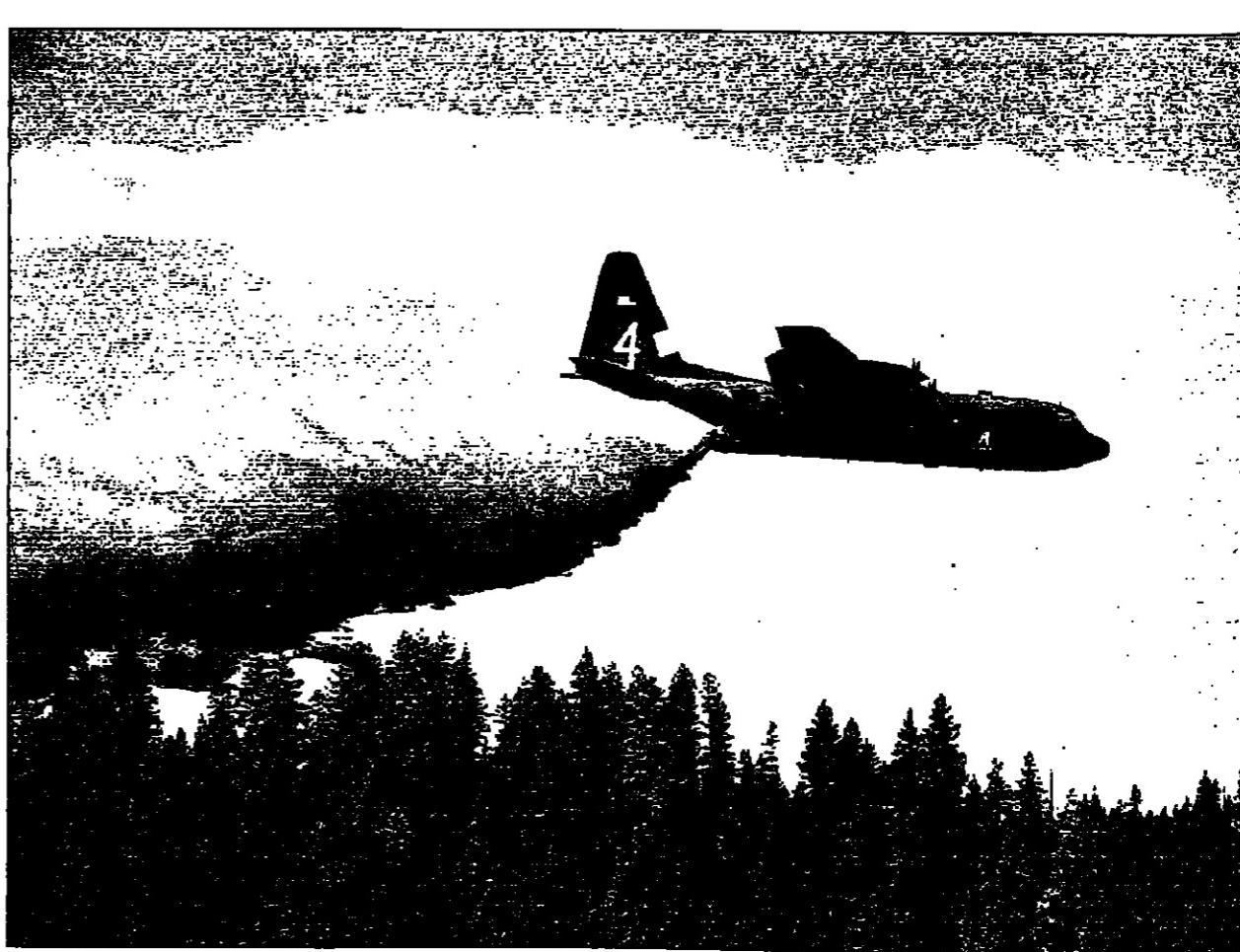
Fire control by the federal government began when the US cavalry rode into Yellowstone Park in 1886. They were greeted with fires, which they fought. Yet this is highly irrational: "Warfare is not a good model for fire practices," he says, and though money, men and machines have been poured into fire-fighting, it is often to little effect. The Yellowstone firestorm sucked in huge resources "with no appreciable effect on fire size or behaviour", says Pyne. And the suppression of fire,

which plays a vital role in the ecosystem, has had a catastrophic effect on the wildlands. He calls America's strategy "an environmental tragedy".

There has been a rethinking as the lessons of past seasons are learnt. In the early days fire-fighters worked by the rule of 10: a fire had to be limited to 10 acres, or under control by 10 o'clock the following day. "That put a priority on getting fires out without looking at the cost of doing so," says Denby Truesdale of the Forest Service. "If a fire's in a real wilderness, it's doing very little damage."

Cost has been one consideration in the new thinking; but in the last decade there has also been more thought given to the virtues of fire as an essential part of the natural cycle of destruction and regeneration. Without small and regular fires, there is a build-up of brush and dead vegetation in forests that amounts to a hidden bomb. Today's fires tend to be larger and more severe, precisely because fire has been so effectively suppressed in past years.

And the after-effects of fire can also be beneficial. Ten years on, Yellowstone Park has emerged from the inferno healthier and thriving. Regrowth has been far more rapid than expected, animals are feeding on fresh new food supplies, and the new forests are likely to be fireproof for a century, now that the deadfall has burnt off. The Forest Service even carries out its own prescribed burning. "We've lit more fires so far this year than we've put out," says Mr Mueller. "People have started to recognise the fact that we need fire," says Mr Truesdale. "We need to burn."



America turned to aircraft as early as the 1920s in order to reach fires deep in the forest

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Releases must consider the victims' families

IN A world without God, who is to dispense forgiveness? Thomas McMahon murdered Lord Mountbatten and two teenage boys while on a fishing trip 19 years ago. This week he was let out of prison, the first of many for whom the Good Friday Agreement is a "Get Out Of Jail Free" card - free, that is, of remorse or reparation. Over the next few months, hundreds of prisoners will be released who have been convicted of more serious crimes than many left behind bars in the UK and the Irish Republic.

The legal and political system is not in the business of forgiveness. McMahon has not been let out because he has been absolved, but because it was for the greater good of the people of Northern Ireland and, to a lesser extent, of the other parts of the British Isles. As part of a difficult, morally compromised process of supporting the IRA's decision - not yet fully acknowledged - to turn away from terrorism, letting murderers out early is an unpleasant necessity. It should be supported with a heavy heart as the least unacceptable option.

But there is a danger in such a historic moment as this that we overlook what the Prime Minister might call the "small picture". For every murderer released, there is a family suffering loss. The release of Mountbatten's killer is a symbolic moment - in much the same way as Mountbatten himself was a symbolic target for the IRA - because Prince Charles's "Uncle Dickie" was a figurehead. But McMahon did not just kill a leading member of the Royal Family - sad though that was - he killed Paul Maxwell, a 15-year-old boatman, as well.

What was important yesterday was not the predictable outcry of a minority of the press and a minority of Unionist politicians. It was the measured response of Paul's father, John Maxwell, who said that keeping McMahon in jail would not bring his son back: "Peace is the imperative now, and we must look forward so that perhaps Paul's death and those of thousands of others from both sides of the political divide here will not have been entirely in vain."

It was the same brave sentiment as shown by the families of so many other victims of terrorism. The strength to look up from the small picture of personal grief to the big picture of a more peaceful future.

But that small picture matters. If forgiveness has any meaning in modern secular society, then it must be a matter of personal reconciliation between criminals and the families of their victims. This may sound a little like an apology for the conventions of Islamic law, which allow the relatives of the victim to determine the sentence. We saw the defects of that - as a principle of jurisprudence - in the case of the British nurses in Saudi Arabia. But it is nevertheless the case that western legal systems have moved too far in the opposite direction, and one of Jack Straw's



more promising ideas at the level of small-scale crime is that of confronting offenders with those who have suffered from their deprivations.

This is an approach that should have been carried through to the Northern Ireland peace agreement. As well as filling in forms applying for release, prisoners should perhaps be writing statements addressed to the relatives of their victims expressing regret. That would seem to be at least as important as paper de-

clarations of which organisations they are members and their personal repudiation of the use of violence for political ends. Instead, the only acknowledgement of the interests of the victims' families is that they will be "notified" when each prisoner is about to be set free.

A better understanding of the feelings of victims might help all of us come to terms with the inevitable injustices of the early release of prisoners. Thomas McMahon is not, perhaps,

the hardest example: he has served 19 years and he repudiated the IRA before that could be seen as a passport to release. But there will be much harder cases to come. In order to prepare for them, Mo Mowlam should do two things. She should give the families of their victims more say. And she should make it absolutely clear that there will be no mercy for re-offenders. On those conditions, the releases should go ahead.

Terrorism is our responsibility, too

IF ANYONE thought that terrorism was on the decline, or had been limited to a few trouble spots, yesterday's car bombs outside the United States' embassies in two African capitals should dispel that optimism. The explosions in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam confirm that the description of the US as the world's sole superpower exaggerates the omniscience and omnipotence of the richest country in the world. They demonstrate that those seeking vengeance, for whatever reason, have the reach and the means to attack soft targets anywhere. It does not take large numbers of people, or large amounts of money, or a great deal of skill to launch terrorist attacks - all it takes is a sense of mission and a cheap air ticket.

Any industrial democracy is faced by the problem that however much it may defend its obvious targets, there will always be others, and that the price of adopting any role whatsoever on the world stage is exposure to a permanent and imminent threat of bloody, localised mayhem.

It is much too early, however, to begin to apportion blame or draw lessons, save for the obvious. The first is that there will always be a tension between the ideal of free, passportless global travel and El Al-style intrusive security measures. The second is that terrorism is a shared responsibility, and that the nations of the world must share more information about the threats - given that almost all of them arise from some kind of known ideological obsession, even the US's own internal terrorism, such as the Oklahoma bombing. Yesterday it was US embassies; tomorrow it could be ours.

More tea, please

MORE TEA, vicar? Sadly not, these days. We are losing our taste for our national drink. The Tea Council is worried. The Tetley tea men are fretting. The PG chimp is screeching with anxiety. They are right to be. Tea sales have been slipping over many years. One of the more regrettable consumer fads of the 1990s has been the invasion of ersatz American-style coffee bars, all stainless steel and froth and cool. Their meretricious charms have proved all too attractive to us, especially for those who want to live out a *Sleepless in Seattle* fantasy lifestyle in Wapping or Wolverhampton. It looks all too much like a re-run of the grey squirrel versus the native red or McDonald's versus the chippie. Now it is the espresso macchiato versus the cuppa.

But it has to be said that the decline of tea is, to some extent, our own fault. We have failed to honour our heritage. The tea bag is now ubiquitous. Even the poshest restaurants and hotels do not serve tea with tea leaves and a tea-strainer any more. It is time to launch the campaign for real tea and for the revival of the old British tea house.

Asian values have nothing to do with generals in the grip of madness

THE FOUR prisoners shared the same cramped cell in Rangoon's Insein jail. It is one of Asia's most notorious prisons. Murder, torture, starvation, sexual abuse. Insein has all of that and more. It is less a building than an all-consuming darkness. The story of the four prisoners - told by a former inmate - offers a brutal illustration of the point.

One night, after the four men had been locked in, two of them made an effort to stay awake after their colleagues had fallen asleep. They then took loosened bricks from the wall and beat the sleeping men to death.

Was this the result of a typical prison vendetta? Had they taken out over money or drugs? On the contrary. When admitting their crime the two murderers made a point of saying that they had no argument with their dead cellmates. The murders had been carried out simply to establish their status among the wider prison population. The dead men had just been unlucky enough to share the cell with two of the jail's more ambitious criminals. With two "kills" to their credit they immediately rose in the jail ranking, earning the respect of their warders and fellow convicts. According to one survivor of Insein, the two were even appointed to the prison administration board.

Those who know Burma are unlikely to be surprised by this story. It is in fact a useful

metaphor for the state itself: a place where kindness and decency are vices, where greed and brutality are virtues. It is more than the law of the jungle. Nowhere among wild animals will you find the specialised cruelty of Burma's torturers.

The country of the Generals is not a nation state; it is what I like to call a psychocracy, a country in the grip of a madness. This state of mind has been created by a military clique who seem immune to logic and impervious to pressure. Any sane mind can see that if there are no negotiations the Burmese will, sooner or later, rid themselves of these dictators. It may take years but the reckoning when it comes will not be pleasant. The wise, sensible and self-preserving thing for the regime to do would be to talk while there is time. But the Junta has spurned negotiation and relies now on the brutality of places like Insein to keep the population cowed.

Ten years ago today the people stood up against the military and were brutally crushed. On the streets of Rangoon the guns of the army cut down thousands of protesters. There was no live television coverage, what images we did see were smuggled out. The true picture of that awful period only emerged over time as survivors fled to neighbouring countries. They brought stories of massacre and detention but still, they promised, the spirit of democracy was alive.

FERGAL KEANE
White South Africa produced courageous leaders. There is no sign of that in Burma

The point was forcefully demonstrated two years later when the army - against all expectations - allowed free elections and the National League for Democracy of Aung San Suu Kyi won an overwhelming victory. More than 80 per cent of the vote! It was the kind of mandate democratic politicians dream about. And this for a woman with no guns, no goons and no hibes to give. What Aung San Suu Kyi offered was something closer to true Asian values than any of the guff spouted by Mahatir Mohammed and the other apologists for authoritarianism.

Hers was the language of tolerance and gentleness. One had only to spend a few hours in Burma to recognise her extraordinary claim on the people's affections. They call her

"The Lady" and whisper her name when they can.

I first met her on the morning after she'd been released from house arrest - 10 July, 1995. It was my first visit to Burma, a hurried dash from Hong Kong along with scores of other correspondents. She gave me her first broadcast interview explaining that she had followed South Africa's transition to democracy by listening to my voice on the BBC World Service. But any temptation to swooning on my part was quickly cut short. Her interview was a concise and powerful political statement. Set the people free, she said, let them enjoy the democracy they voted for. The Junta did nothing of the sort. Instead it has been steadily tightening the repression.

But maybe there is cause for hope now. When I lived and worked in Asia nearly two years ago it was hard to find anyone who believed that a regional economic crisis was looming. That was the age of the glutinous: soaring new skyscrapers, acres of new golf courses, the finest cognacs flowing to one dodgy deal following another. It was an ugly time and Burma's generals were some of the biggest snouts in the trough. It was party time for the rich and powerful and their western friends.

There was the language of tolerance and gentleness. One had only to spend a few hours in Burma to recognise her extraordinary claim on the people's affections. They call her

Englishman treated me to lunch at an old colonial club and boasted of the fine standard of living he enjoyed in that land of multiple brutalities. Not that he was short of justifications for his presence. I had to endure the usual twaddle about investment helping the poor; the "constructive engagement" line about dialogue being the best way forward.

Whenever I asked one of these princes of industry if they'd met the democratically elected leader they looked at me blankly. No, they preferred to do deals with the Junta. Money was their business, not liberty or justice. Some of these foreigners liked to fall back on the "philosophy" of Asian values. The Burmese, like other Asians, wanted strong government, they said. "It is their culture," one investor explained. Culture my eye. For most of these businessmen "Asian values" provided a useful alibi.

One of the most depressing features of that period was the singular failure of western leaders to mount any defence of liberal values. Too many of them were mesmerised by the Asian "miracle". Some of the brightest commentators and politicians fell victim to an intellectual fatid that celebrated soaring growth but failed to point up the cronyism, oppression and sleight of hand on which so much of it was built. Now that the bubble has burst and the poor are suffering more

than ever we can see "Asian values" for what they were.

When Robin Cook launched his ethical foreign policy, the Burmese people took him at his word. To its credit the Labour government has signalled a much tougher attitude towards the regime. But if Burma is to become an issue that dominates the European foreign policy agenda, then Mr Cook himself must become engaged. Up to now day-to-day running of Burma's policy has been left in the hands of Derek Fatchett. He is both capable and engaged, but he lacks the political clout of Mr Cook.

We must remember the fundamental fact of political life in this former British colony: an armed group is preventing the democratically elected leader from assuming her rightful place at the head of the people. It is very simple. There is no grey area here. As the former colonial power Britain should be leading the way in opposing this wretched state of affairs. I don't believe the Junta is entirely impervious to pressure, any more than white South Africans were. The difference, of course, is that white South Africa produced courageous leaders who recognised the need for change. There is no sign of that in Burma. The ultimate test of the regime's sanity will lie in its willingness to change before there is an explosion of anger. After decades of terror the Burmese deserve their freedom without blood.



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DAVID SHAYLER'S REVELATIONS*Judgements as to whether the former MI5 employee was right to reveal the activities of Britain's secret services***THE GUARDIAN**

THERE HAVE long been rumours of Mr Shayler's claim that, in 1996, MI5 ran and bungled a covert operation to assassinate Muammar Gadaffi. We, along with the entire British press, did not publish it because we were gagged by a tight injunction imposed when the former agent first surfaced last autumn.

But yesterday Mr Shayler's allegations entered the public domain, via an article in the *New York Times*. It seemed to us absurd to continue to keep British readers in the dark on the actions of a secret service which we pay for and which acts in our name.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

DID THE British government try to assassinate Colonel Muammar Gadaffi, the Libyan leader, in February 1996, by planting a bomb under his motorcade? Britons may never know the answers, or even the credibility of the assertions, but for the last few days the nation has been consumed by the questions. Or at least, sort of consumed, because news organisations are not really allowed to ask them. The media has been forced to discuss allegations without actually saying what the allegations are.

The case is threatening to turn into a repeat of the infamous *Spycatcher* case of 1986. Now, with the advent of the Internet, it is probably only a matter of time before Shayler's allegations are disseminated. Even so the government has taken the harshest possible stand against the news media.

THE EVENING STANDARD

MR SHAYLER, for all his extravagant claims, remains an unconvincing witness. On his latest assertion, about an alleged British bomb plot to kill Colonel Gadaffi, two politically incorrect observations are possible. First, if the story is true, it is strongly against Britain's interests that it should have been revealed. And second, if the plot was real and had succeeded and remained secret,

SIS would have done more to justify its budget than anything it has achieved since mid-Cold War.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

MR SHAYLER's claims are, at best, utterly incomprehensible. But even if they were all true, that would be beside the point. Let us not overlook the obvious: secret services are supposed to be secret. Secrecy engenders the trust that is vital for MI5's success, both in recruiting agents and in cooperating with foreign services. Compromise that reputation, and you compromise everything. In a better world, David Shayler and his like would not be lionised: they would be horse-whipped.

BIRMINGHAM POST

CERTAINLY DAVID Shayler appears to belong to a new breed of personnel. He was never among the elite of MI5, that much is obvious, but even so its lowest operatives would have access to sensitive material and, therefore, ought to be vetted in painstaking detail. When one surveys Mr Shayler, it is almost impossible to believe that he might have secured his job via a *Guardian* advertisement. He has now become what could be termed, in the spy-speak of le Carré, an embarrassment. In the new era of openness, he has forced the authorities to bring down the weight of international law, in order to enforce secrecy. Never mind the illusion, in reality, nothing has changed. A new corporate image might have been adopted, and the personnel are of a different type, but behind the facade, business goes on as usual and it is as murky as ever it was.

TRIBUNE

IT seems that history is about to repeat itself as Jack Straw prepares the way for a prosecution of MI5 dissident, David Shayler. Mr Shayler's crime? To call for the accountability and scrutiny of the security services that Labour demanded when in Opposition.

THE WAR IN KOSOVO

Editorial opinion on whether Nato should intervene to halt the Serbian army offensive against the Kosovo Liberation Army

**LA STAMPA**
Italy

THE LATEST act of the Yugoslav tragedy seems to be an evil repetition of the atrocities verified in the siege of Dubrovnik, the destruction of Vukovar and the massacres of Sarajevo and Srebrenica. Kosovo has been transformed into a demolished, nightmarish Utopia, a shrine to a defunct Serbs that has 100,000 Serbs besieged by about two million Albanians. Milosevic's war on Kosovo is yet another "fake

civil war" between opposing forces: the "anti-terrorist" Serbian police against the "terrorist" Kosovo Liberation Army. The ineffective attempts by these so-called terrorists offer Milosevic international justification for his real war: the one against the Albanian population.

THE MIRROR
UK

HEAVEN KNOWS what Serb forces hope to achieve by the

MISCELLANEOUS*Stories from around the world***THE NATION**
Pakistan

DEATH BY stove burning, a trend imported from India, has been in vogue since the start of the Eighties as a convenient way of getting rid of a wife who has brought a small dowry or refuses to flee her parents for more money at the behest of her husband or in-laws. Now a law has been passed to register a case against the husband and his family the moment such an incident is reported, usually leading to indictment of murder or an attempt to murder if the lady survives.

Crime against women is by no means declining. In fact, the present state of affairs in the country can lead to a worsening of the existing situation. The recession in the economy is going to lead to a higher level of unemployment, resulting in

an enhanced level of frustration in the society. It is always the weak link in a chain that breaks first, and in our society women and children are the weak link. So, inevitably, they will be the first ones to suffer the brunt of the existing situation.

ST PETERSBURG TIMES
Russia

A PROGRAM of ethnic cleansing has been initiated in all places, southern St Petersburg. Denis Usov, a 24-year-old deputy in one of Kupchinsk's recently elected neighbourhood district councils, has initiated a program to rid the area of ethnic minorities, specifically those from the Caucasus. Usov has distributed leaflets throughout his district, asking citizens to report to him the

addresses of suspicious-looking people of Caucasian nationality "who are engaging in anti-social and criminal activities", so he can turn them over to the police.

TIMES OF INDIA

A GADGET that deletes swearing from video films and television programmes should be in the shops next year. At the appropriate moment, it automatically mutes the sound to censor words and there is an option to display more moderate dialogue as a subtitle. The device's software contains a dictionary of 100 alert words alongside a list of tame substitutes: "jerk" and "crud", for example, are two catch-all able to fill in for a variety of profanities. The phrase "go away" also gets a lot of use.

MICHELLE DE BRUIN

Irish views on the banning of the champion swimmer for tampering with a drugs test

THE IRISH TIMES

AS A NATION, we desperately wanted to believe that our sporting heroes were a race apart, more honourable and less conniving, somehow immune from the ills of modern professional sport. Today, Michelle de Bruin is shown to have feet of clay. Perhaps, that is no bad thing. The ambivalence that has clung to her achievements has been removed by the ruling by FINA (the sport's ruling body). Every promising teenage athlete who dreams of glory has learned a salutary lesson: any suspicion of violating the rules and ethics of sport can only end in tears.

THE IRISH INDEPENDENT

THE SWIMMER'S family have already indicated that she will fight yesterday's decision "to the death" and it is certainly to be hoped that that fight is won. Ireland has known many great

episodes in sport, but few will compare with the extraordinary week two summers back when a girl from Rathcoole simply dominated the swimming world. We gloried in her achievements back then and we should not abandon Michelle now. It is one of the quirks of doping law that the burden of proof rests with the defendant, not the prosecution. Under normal rules of justice she is innocent for the simple reason that she most certainly has not been proved guilty.

THE IRISH NEWS

IT IS UP to the authorities to ensure that their tests are rigorous enough to detect offenders at an early stage, but there is little evidence of this happening. If the suspension of Ms de Bruin, the first in the 104-year history of the Irish swimming body, helps to prevent the use of drugs by others, the whole sorry saga could yet have at least some beneficial consequences.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"What I am doing tomorrow is something I never, ever wanted to do. It breaks my heart." Monica Lewinsky, the night before her testimony to the Grand Jury

"Really well-rounded people don't make it to the top." Gerry Robinson, chief executive of Granada and chairman of the Arts Council

"I see no room in scripture or Christian tradition for any sexual activity outside matrimony of husband and wife." Dr George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury

"While I respect that to affirm homosexual practices would be evangelical suicide, to condemn them would be evangelical suicide in my region." Catherine Rossiter, Bishop of New York, at the Lambeth Conference

"I feel like a lover who has been abandoned and who fears she is about to discover a betrayal." Helen Wilkinson, co-founder of the Demos think-tank, on New Labour in government

FILM OF THE WEEK

Re-release of the 1938 movie, 'Adventures of Robin Hood'

THE DAILY MAIL

MOVIEGOERS WITH lingering traces of humanity and a sense of humour may be wise to ignore Armageddon and rush instead to enjoy Errol Flynn in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Shot in glowing storybook colours which make it look unlike any other film, this is widely – and rightly – considered the definitive family swashbuckler, climaxing in one of the most exciting swordfights ever put on screen. (Christopher Toogood)

**THE EVENING STANDARD**

MADE BY Warner Brothers 60 years ago, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* still satisfies the sort of hunger that present day cinema all too often ignores: the hunger to be told a story. It's how they used to make adventures – big, fast, bold and not too seriously. Special effects are zero, psychology is basic, dialogue is no more than serviceable, characters have the clarity of cutouts. But the storybook spell falls on actors and action like a simple blessing in a complex world. Cry your eyes out for the days when most movies set out simply to entertain – then rub them in gratitude at this survivor. (Alexander Walker)

TIME OUT

BORED WITH all the "big" summer movies? It's Errol Flynn to the rescue as this classic Hollywood adventure gets a most welcome 60th-anniversary renaissance. It has Flynn at the top of his game. Perhaps only Cary Grant and John Wayne ever looked so completely at home in their own skin as he does here, winning the day with a smile which knows that none of it is to be taken too seriously. There may be injustice to fight and a fair maiden's hand for the taking, but here is a man confident in the realisation that the day's shooting will soon be over and the real business of the cocktail hour awaits. The best fun you'll have in a cinema this year, for sure. (Trevor Johnston)

John Lewis

If you see Big Tony, tell him I'll be on Bodmin Moor

YOU NOW have exactly one year to book your place in the Millennium's final total eclipse of the sun. According to my celestial charts, the best place to be if you really want to get an eyeful is Bucharest. A guaranteed 2 minutes, 22.59 seconds of pitch black. The trouble with that calculation is that it means being in Bucharest. Better to have off down to Cornwall, I reckon, coming off the A30 at Bodmin, even if you will thereby lose 22.14 seconds of darkness. It's not just the phenomenon you go for; after all, it's also the people.

And who better to be among than the Cornish when the planets start playing up? Don't ask me why, but they're more astronomically connected down there. Some Celtic or Druidical thing.

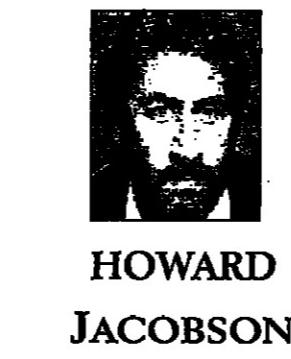
Something to do with stone circles and tides.

The Halley-Bop Comet had every white witch in the county out. You couldn't move on Bodmin Moor for virginity in their nighties. Nine months after Telstar was spotted over Helston, twin children with heavenly blue eyes were born to elderly and infertile parents who hadn't coupled for a decade. Everyone knows that full moons occasion riotous behaviour in Cornwall, but a half moon can get them going just as well; and some of the wildest parties I've ever been to in Boscastle or Tintagel were thrown when there was no moon around to speak of.

Not being a reader of Nos-tradamus I don't know precisely what to expect of Britain's last total solar eclipse until Tony Blair

loses the 2000 election. But I'll be surprised if the Cornish don't seize upon it as another pretext for celebrating the end of the world. I lived in Cornwall for a number of years and we were always celebrating the end of the world. Why not? Wake up in a strange place the next morning with streamers in your hair and chicken giblets in your pockets only to discover that the world hasn't ended after all - well, you can always find a way of coming to terms with that.

The most committed planetary end-of-the-world I ever met in Cornwall wasn't himself Cornish. He was from Walthamstow. Big Tony. A huge, bearded shmalzball of a man - a cross between Father Christmas, Falstaff, Chas and Dave, and Oliver Reed - who ran



HOWARD JACOBSON

a Waltham Forest street market in the winter and drove down to Cornwall in a van loaded with cheap sunglasses the moment the sun rose so much as winked from behind a cloud. He was how we knew the sun

was coming. We measured the seasons by him. He was our harbinger of light.

I met him while I was in the employ of my wife, systematically lowering the standard of her craft shop. All very nice, the stoneware teapots and the hand-blown wine goblets at forty smackers a throw, but where were the bunsen lines? The Chinese paperweights, the slate paintings, the plaster of Paris pixies? I'd grown up in a market trader family. I liked to see the gear moving out. So when Big Tony blew into the village with a vanload of sort-of-Raybans and a collection of glitzy carousels to display them on, I couldn't say no to him. I took the vanload.

My wife sent every last pair back. And the carousels. The fact

that you could mark up sunglasses by anything up to a thousand per cent didn't cut any ice with her. She wasn't in it for the money. But then neither was Big Tony. They were both in it for the sun.

He loved whatever you could see through the sun. Champagne, chablis, tequila sunrises. He loved whatever you could smell the sea on also. Oysters, lobsters, caviar. He would come for a night and stay for a week, drinking the village dry, eating seafood faster than the fishermen could catch it. Hearing his vanload of crappy sunglasses rattling from as far away as Budleigh, wives would hide their husbands under the beds. Do I have that the wrong way round? No. Lover of women though he was - because you can see the sun through women

too, if you know which way to hold them - he loved laughing with men even more. There was an atmosphere of Dionysiac knees-up about him. The trouble was, every other man's knees buckled long before his. After a week of Big Tony the village looked as though it had been hit by famine and plague. And a mysterious outbreak of male migraine.

He gave it all up himself, in the end, to become an artist. Since when I haven't seen him. But I'm banking on running into him on Bodmin Moor when the sun goes black. Solar eclipses are dangerous things - someone has to be out there selling protective glasses. And should it turn out to be the end of the world after all, he'll be just the man to toast the final dying of the light with.

Stone Age man had the time of his life

SATURDAY PROFILE

MESOLITHIC MAN

TEN YEARS ago we would have thought that this man was the type who, on finding his mother dead one morning, might roll her body into a shallow trench before heading off, grunting, to catch his lunch, or perhaps drag a woman by the hair back to his cave.

Not so. This week it was revealed that Stone Age humans living at Carrowmore, County Sligo in Ireland about 7,400 years ago built the earliest tombs yet identified in Western Europe.

A tomb is a significant thing; it indicates respect for the dead (which to any other animal is just new meat) and that you are prepared to take time building and preparing a special place for them. The Carrowmore find includes the bones of up to 50 cremated people lying in a free-standing stone building at the centre of three concentric stone circles, each stone carefully chosen for size. This was no lean-to; it was the fruit of real devotion.

Allied to that finding, in recent years we have discovered that so many of our other preconceptions about the people who lived in the Stone Age (more properly known as the Mesolithic era) were wrong.

Grunting, male-dominated unsophisticates? Not at all. They had a spoken language perhaps as rich as ours, for their mental capacity was the same. They lived communal lives in which women had an important place. This was a population that had a balanced diet, and chewing gum (made from birch bark tar) and favoured by teenagers) to go with it. They had an enviable, healthy lifestyle that only required them to "work" (that is, hunt

two or three days a week, and where summer fashions could include a coat made from swans' skins.

They were about as tall as us; they lived almost as long (though more children would have died young). But they didn't have mobile phones, traffic jams, or impenetrably wrapped sandwiches.

Yet while our pre-agricultural ancestors may have been technically naive, they had a satisfactory life.

The common misconception is that they were living on the edge of starvation, in small groups, wandering around from place to place," says Peter Rowley-Conwy, Reader in Archaeology at the University of Durham. "But we know from studies of sites and environmental conditions that life was probably a good deal easier for most people, for the most part, than convention has it."

Following the end of the Ice Age and the retreat of the ice sheets from Britain and Ireland about 10,000 years ago, the weather was a degree or two warmer than now (a fact revealed by ice core samples from the Arctic), and the land was covered with fast-growing trees taking advantage of the rich soil. For a hunter-gatherer food was plentiful. "There were five large animal species to hunt - elk, roe deer, red deer, wild boar and aurochs, the wild cattle," says Dr Rowley-Conwy. "That offered a reliable food supply because they won't all have a bad year at the same time. There were plants, fruits

and berries as well. And there was always fishing, both in the sea and rivers."

Nor were they condemned to a peripatetic life. Instead, archaeologists have uncovered encampments, whose size varies from 25 to 50 inhabitants in the interior (where fishing would not provide a resource to between 100 and 200 at the more fecund coastal regions). Rather than shunning caves, they made buildings from branches covered with animal skins.

The period is called the "Mesolithic" for the flint tools - "liths" - uncovered in numerous digs around Europe. Making stone tools was a communal effort, in which even the children would take part, learning from adults how to make the implements they would later use to tip weapons, to grind and crush food such as berries, and skin animals.

That may seem ordinary. But what marks out Mesolithic humans is the respect that they paid to their dead.

The significance of burying your dead, and having a tomb, is hard to underestimate. "This is one field where archaeology has really changed our views in this century," says Dr Rowley-Conwy. "What we now realise is that hunter-gatherers had a very, very rich spiritual life. After all, their mental capacity was exactly the same as ours." (The unrelated Neanderthals, with a limited mental and linguistic capacity, had died out 20,000 years before.)

"Some excavations in Yorkshire have found skulls of deer

with the antlers still intact, but with a couple of extra holes drilled into them," Dr Rowley-Conwy notes. "The thinking is that people, perhaps the shamans in the tribe, used to put them on in rituals of some sort."

Talk of rituals, and spiritual life, and Stonehenge of course comes to mind. Among its enduring mysteries is that of its location. "It is not next to the river, nor the highest hill, nor the deepest valley," says Andrew Lawson of Wessex Archaeology. In 1996 of a circle of 20-foot pine stakes at the site, which were first discovered in 1966, could offer the answer. Carbon-dating suggests that the stakes were placed in 8,000BC - almost as soon as the islands were habitable. They would have looked just like totem poles and performed the same function - monuments to gods or chiefs, at a ritual site.

When first found, they were largely ignored by scientists, who reckoned Mesolithic people would not build such structures. Now, we know better. Mesolithic humans had the time and the intelligence, and - most important - the religious imperative. When you consider the building projects, sometimes lasting decades, that their descendants undertook to site cathedrals all over Europe, the greater surprise is that anyone doubted that Stone Age peoples could put up such lasting monuments.

It was in some ways the endless summer: communal property, no capitalism (for there was little need to trade) and only the occasional territorial skirmish with other tribes for hunting rights to a forest or river. Women had an important role, reckons Dr Christopher Meiklejohn of the department of anthropology at Winnipeg University. "Women had a political power in these societies," he notes. After all, the females were the ones who kept the tribes alive, though there are no surviving details to say whether polygamy or polyandry (multiple husbands) were practised. (Both are found in primitive tribes today.)

"There is evidence to suggest that women lost most of their political power, and for them got worse, with the arrival of agriculture." This phase lasted for about 2,000 years.

Farming began in the Middle East and gradually spread, displacing or incorporating hunter-gatherers. Agriculture can support more people per square mile, and is an entirely settled lifestyle.

Men as well as women suffered by the arrival of agriculture. "Farming presents a worse-quality diet, because you're only eating a couple of basic crops," says Dr Rowley-Conwy. "And it has a worse effect on your teeth because you're grinding down wheat, which will have stones in it, rather than tearing meat. Hunter-gatherer skeletons have better teeth and are taller." The average early farmer was only about 5' 3" tall - the result of undernourishment, not genes.

New diseases also arrived, from viruses carried by animals that were being domesticated. Among those was

smallpox, which was only eradicated in the past decade.

Indeed, there are many signs that the hunter-gatherers regarded the incoming farmers with all the affection of Millwall fans encountering their Chelsea counterparts after a bad loss. Some later farmers' settlements were fortified, but it's hard to say whether there was outright war; more that the farmers came, saw and their method conquered. Some groups appear to have traded (bartering furs and tools for food) while others seem to have preserved antipathy.

Eventually it was a cooling of the climate which meant that the hunter-gatherer life (if not the people) was gradually displaced, over about 1,000 years, away from the interior towards the coastlines where ready food was more plentiful. And then it finally died out, leaving us with our world today.

Even so, when we look at Mesolithic man or woman, we see ourselves. Their DNA is the same (so much so that a

9,000-year-old skeleton from the Cheddar Gorge shows a direct line of maternal descent to a teacher living there).

All that has changed is our environment. We, like they, have temples and tombs, and tribes and affiliations. If we are increasingly coming to respect Stone Age man, it is perhaps because we are recognising that in many ways, he knew the good life. Can we say the same today?

CHARLES ARTHUR

I too thought the unthinkable - and failed

SATURDAY ESSAY by ALFRED SHERMAN



Sir Alfred Sherman: ideologue of the Tory right

FRANK FIELD'S current tribulations are widely interpreted as a Prometheus penalty for "thinking the unthinkable", a dictum of mine from the heady days of the early Centre for Policy Studies, whose wider currency I owe to Dr Richard Cockett's book of that name on the mixed fortunes of think-tanks.

Matters are not as simple as that. But first, a backward glance at the phrase's origins. I adduced it when I was elaborating the modus operandi of the nascent centre as the second of four linked dicta. The first three were: "Question the unquestioned; think the unthinkable; blaze a trail." The first requires intellectual courage and readiness to challenge intellectual vested interests.

Unless you first clear the ground of outmoded beliefs which have failed the pragmatic test, there is no room for the unthinkable, which may often be new, but may also be older, wisdom forgotten and rediscovered. (For example, we ignore the Victorians' distinction between deserving and undeserving poor at our peril.) To think the unthinkable requires moral courage. Most people at most times and places are conservative, particularly those who benefit from the status quo, which is inexorably bound up with existing ideas and beliefs. (Beliefs are ideas which are taken for granted and for that reason are

both more crucial than ideas in determining behaviour in public affairs and private life, and more difficult to dispel by new ideas, since they are hidden deeper in the consciousness and protected by mental habit.)

Thinking the unthinkable provides an impulse for action to bring reality into line with thought; otherwise, what is the point in fresh thinking, which only generates frustration? Blazing a trail calls for political courage. Safety lies with the herd; to leave it entails risk. Conviction is needed.

But that is only the beginning. At the time, I defined the innovator's role as bringing to patron or public those ideas or factual sequences and explanations which they had not heard before but which, once stated, impressed themselves as obvious, or at least worthy of a hearing. Only this could generate the initial impetus needed to shake the walls of Jericho reinforced by interlocking layers of ideas, beliefs and vested interests.

That was the position in the spring of 1974, when the Conservatives were deeply shocked by their defeat at the hands of Scargill's flying pickets and wondered whether civilisation as we knew it was not coming to an end. Keith Joseph's three words - "we were wrong" - started an avalanche. Clearly, the mood was there, awaiting arousal.

At the CPS, I had a wonderful "unthinkable" in our locker. Was the economy really amen-

able to control through manipulation of the interest rate or money supply, as every government had believed, and every opposition queried since the late Forties? Keith Joseph had said "No" in his *Monetarism is not Enough*, with a commendatory foreword by Thatcher. But in 1979, the new Government continued the neo-Keynesian monetary squeeze imposed by Denis Healey at the IMF's behest in 1976, with even greater intensity and Friedmanite rhetoric. The economy has survived the Tories' consequent misadventures and fall. On the BBC's *Newsnight* this week, a trades union

leader, John Edmonds, complained that whereas the late John Smith, when shadow Chancellor, had exorcized the Government's dependence on interest-rate policy as a "one golf club" policy, Gordon Brown was still practicing it. This indicates the resistance of established ways to critical thought, just as bacteria survive antibiotics.

After the 1983 election (which was much less of a victory than it appeared at first sight, since it did not increase the Conservatives' share of the poll even when faced by Foot's depleted ranks), the CPS was de-Shermanised to bring thinking the unthinkable, which a complacent Government was beginning to find irksome, to an end. At the time, we had plenty of unthinkable questions in our war chest. Does all evidence, as well as logic, not question the certainty that transport subsidies diminish congestion and pollution and are socially progressive? Is a statutory school leaving age of 16 sustainable? Have rent control, slum clearance, council housing and towns and country planning not done more harm than good, particularly to those strata in whose name they were undertaken? Can the NHS conceivably survive in the long term?

Once it ceased to question the unquestioned and think the un-

thinkable - have thought the unthinkable to the point of moving beyond institutional concepts and measures, eg systems of welfare-payments, fraud-prevention and provision of work opportunities, to the nature of the welfare-state, what Marx dubbed the "lumpen-proletariat", and British reformers called "the submerged tenth". This entails identifying the socio-psychological characteristics which perpetuate them as a social class, an indispensable key to changing their nature and condition. This is ignored in the government Social Exclusion Unit's terms of reference, which treat the lumpenproletariat purely as objects, or victims, and ignore the paradox which was identified by Dr Tocqueville as long ago as 1850, that with increasing affluence poverty becomes both more chronic and more evident.

Alas poor Frank! We should spare a tear for Harriet Harman. Unlike him, she did not think the unthinkable but actually did it, at Blair's behest, trimming welfare to the welfare-mothers. Having attracted all the obloquy for the policy to herself personally, she was expelled into the wilderness, the archetypal scapegoat, while Frank ascends to heaven, extolled or consoled on all sides. Meanwhile, the need to think the unthinkable remains as great as ever.

Nat Gonella

"I HAD three wives. I don't know if that helps." The trumpeter Nat Gonella was reflecting on the reasons that he was still alive and entertaining audiences at 90. By then he'd been a star attraction for more than 70 years.

"He was like Louis Armstrong in his personality, as well as in his playing," said Humphrey Lyttelton.

"There was no side about either of them and they were both basically modest people. Nat will be remembered for his close links to Louis's music, but I like to remember his own originality and humour. He had his big hits like 'Tiger Rag' and 'Georgia On My Mind' but I treasure his spirited originals like 'I'd Like to See Samoa of Samoa'."

"Despite his continuous popularity over all those years there was nothing big-time about Nat. When he was 70 one of his recordings, 'Oh Monah' became a very big hit in Holland. He was interviewed on the BBC at the time and the interviewer asked him if this was the re-launch of his career. Nat was horrified. 'No,' he said. 'I'm an old man. The house is paid for, the car's paid for, the wife's paid for, I'm not going back on the road.'

Gonella was one of seven children. His father originally drove a hansom cab and then became one of the first of London's motorised taxi drivers. He died in 1915 when Gonella was six and his mother, unable to support their children, had to place him and a brother and sister in an orphanage. Gonella and another boy tried to escape but were held in a north London police station. The master who retrieved them made them first remove their braces. They were marched back to the school with their hands in their pockets to keep their trousers up.

Despite Gonella's disapproval of it, it was a good school with its own brass band. He joined the band when he was nine, as a drummer, but soon graduated to playing the cornet. His brother Brutus Gonella also played in the band and was later to join Nat Gonella's Georgians.

Gonella suffered from rheumatic fever and had to spend six months in the school hospital. He was left with a weak heart that frustrated his attempt to join the army when he left the school. He became an errand boy until he saw in the *Stage* an advertisement calling for young brass players.

A successful audition led to him switching to trumpet and joining Archie Pitt's Busby Boys, a touring band led by the husband of Gracie Fields. Gonella appeared with the group in a musical show *A Week's Pleasure*. Fields worked as a choreographer for the show.

She and Gonella became friends and when she replaced her gramophone she gave Gonella her old one and with it his first jazz records, including one by the cornetist Bix Beiderbecke. This was Gonella's introduction to jazz, and he soon began to find the Louis Ar-

strong records that were to change his life.

A Week's Pleasure ran for two and a half years and when it finished Gonella toured for a further 18 months with another of Pitt's shows, *Safety First*. When the tour finished he joined a show band led by Bob Dryden, playing seasons in Margate, Manchester and Belfast before joining Billy Cotton's band in 1928 for a season at the Streatham Locarno dance hall. He made his first recordings with Cotton and also worked in the bands of Lew Stone, Roy Fox and Ray Noble and then formed his own band, the Georgians. He married his first wife, Betty, in 1930.

Louis Armstrong came to Britain in July 1932 to play for two weeks at

'Nat was horrified. "No," he said. "I'm an old man. The house is paid for, the car's paid for, the wife's paid for, I'm not going back on the road'"

the London Palladium. Gonella and his brother managed to hear every one of Armstrong's performances and it was then that Gonella's friendship with Armstrong began. In 1934 a record appeared on Decca described as *Jazz Orchestra with Hot Trumpet*. It was Gonella's first recording of Hoagy Carmichael's tune "Georgia On My Mind" and it became both an enduring hit and Gonella's signature tune, also providing him with the name for his band.

The Georgians had begun as a small group within Lew Stone's big band, but it soon became a separate unit. As such it made its debut at the Newcastle Empire in 1935. As Gonella's popularity burgeoned, he and the band played to full houses in theatres all over the country, broadcast regularly and made several film appearances, including *Pity the Poor Rich* (1935) and later with the Mills Brothers, *Sing As You Swing* (1937).

His version of "Tiger Rag" was a continuing hit and Parlophone used it on a trumpet tuition record they issued to tie in with Gonella's book *Modern Style Trumpet Playing*, published in 1935. He became established as the outstanding figure in British jazz and inspired a generation of musicians, including players like Humphrey Lyttelton. The Georgians toured in Holland at the end of the year and Gonella's popularity there was to last for the rest of his life.

Most of the fan mail that he received was from female admirers, although a magazine feature on him called "The Girls Who Want To Marry Me" had nothing to do with the collapse of his marriage in 1936. Such was the demand for his music that he made 57 recordings in that year alone. In 1937 he made 64 "platters", as they were then known, and in one of them was joined by George Formby, who also appeared for a short time in one of Gonella's shows. The vocalist with the band was a film starlet, Stella Moya, whom Gonella later married.

When the band was playing at Sherry's Ballroom in Brighton in 1938, Pats Waller was appearing at the local Hippodrome. The American sat in with Gonella's band at the ballroom and they played his "Honolulu Rose" for an hour. The management of the Hippodrome was not amused and fined Waller £50 for breaking his contract.

In December 1938 Gonella and Stella Moya went to New York where he heard many of the legendary jazz players and met many of his heroes including Armstrong again, Billie Holiday and the rising trumpet star Harry James. Gonella played with John Kirby's band at the famous club, the Hickory House.

In August 1939 the Georgians toured in Sweden and Holland. War broke out and the band had to break up to try to get back to Britain.

Gonella and his wife managed to get to Cannes and were there when the Italians bombed the town. They left eventually on a small steamer jammed with refugees. The ship had two torpedoes fired at it by an enemy submarine before it arrived in Liverpool seven days later. In 1940, despite the shortage of musicians caused by the call-up into the services, Gonella formed a bigger band called the New Georgians. He and Stella Moya married that summer.

Despite his heart problems

Gonella was called into the Pioneer Corps in July 1941 and his income immediately dropped from £150 a week to 10 shillings. Towards the end of the year the Army formed "Stars In Battledress" and Gonella was enrolled in this along with Charlie Chester, George Melachrino and other entertainers. But it didn't last and Gonella was returned to the Pioneer Corps and sent to Africa. When the band of the Royal Tank Regiment played nearby, they co-opted Gonella as a guest and then arranged for his transfer to the Tank Corps. He travelled with the band through North Africa, Sicily and Italy.

At the end of the war he formed a 13-piece band in which he emulated the style of Harry James. His second marriage had broken up and in 1946 he met his third wife, Dorothy, although they did not marry until many years later. The demand for Gonella's music had subsided after the war and his big band declined until eventually it became a quartet. Gonella then tried to play in the newly developed Bebop

style, but his band was a complete failure.

This is Your Life and the same year made an Armstrong-inspired album called *Salute To Satchmo*. But once again he was usurped, this time by the Trad Boom, a less sophisticated form of jazz, and by the emergence of the Beatles.

He moved to Lancashire in retirement and finally settled in Gosport, Hampshire. A biography, *The Nat Gonella Story*, was published in 1985. When he could no longer play the trumpet, he continued to sing regularly at the Gosport Jazz Club: "I'm the sleeping president. I get in for nothing." In 1994 Humphrey Lyttelton, who had long been a friend and had played with Gonella on the *This Is Your Life* broadcast, played again at a Gosport ceremony to rename the square in front of the town hall "Nat Gonella Square".

There was a peculiar quirk in his career in January 1997 when a trumpet sequence Gonella had recorded 65 years earlier was used in a computer-generated hit record called "Your Woman". The title reached the top of the charts. "I never got any money for it," said a bemused Gonella.

Steve Voce

Nathaniel Charles Gonella, trumpeter, vocalist and bandleader; born London 7 March 1908; married first 1930 Betty Godecharle (one daughter; marriage dissolved 1936), second 1940 Stella Moya (marriage dissolved, third Dorothy Collins (died 1996); died Gosport, Hampshire 6 August 1998.

Robin Richmond



THE HISTORY of the organ as a musical entertainment, as opposed to accompanying hymns in church, begins in the late 1920s. The honky-tonk piano which played a soundtrack of sorts to early silent movies was replaced by the great cinema orchestras who played specially composed theme music to the vast epics of D.W. Griffith and his Hollywood contemporaries.

Then came 1927, Al Jolson and the talkies. Hundreds of cinema musicians were sacked as the Vitaphone Orchestra and its ilk added tiny tracks to feature films. But then came the need to fill in those silent pauses in the programme, newsreels for instance and ice-cream intervals. The cinema organist was born. Quarter-hour entertainments were added to the film programmes, thus luring in the customers with an extra added "live" attraction.

Meanwhile the wireless, especially the BBC under Sir John Reith, laced its daily programmes with half-hours of organ interludes, going to town on Sundays with hours of hymns at the church organ. And when the Second World War broke out, almost all the BBC's advertised programmes were cancelled and on came Sandy MacPherson. The BBC staff organist who just about ran the instrument - and himself - into the ground. Fortunately the return to "business as usual" reintroduced popular programming and put the organ back into place as a low-budget slot-filler.

Robin Richmond was not only one of those regularly heard radio organists, he was one of the first swing-timers, concentrating on the latest dance band hits from America and arranging them for his rather special instrument. This was a Hammond Electronic Organ, and Richmond was in fact the first British organist to import such a thing from the States. His instrument, bought in 1934, actually bore the code number "001".

Robin Richmond was born in London in 1912, the son of a doctor. Neither of his parents had any musical talent, but the boy became interested in the organ while at Westminster School. Students were compelled to attend the daily morning service at Westminster Abbey except Richmond discovered those who studied the organ. Thus the delighted schoolboy was able to skip religion in favour of further mu-

sicianship. Advancing to London University to study law, Richmond failed his exams three times before finally giving up. He decided to turn his hobby into his full-time job.

Richmond's earliest employment, however, was in religion. He became organist at the Lambeth Mission Hall, which gave him a mixture of secular and serious to accompany. The hall showed silent films during the week and held services all day

on Sunday. The job did not last for long; the minister sacked him for using drum-style percussion whilst accompanying the hymns.

Richmond now concentrated on popular dance music. His first West End appearance was in the stage revue *It's in the Bag* (1935) which was so devised that he had two special scenes created around his "organantics", a slang term coined around that time. In 1936 he joined

the cast of *Radio Pie*, a touring revue starring the Two Leslies. This was a Thirties act which conjured two popular comic singers, Leslie Sarony and Leslie Holmes, a teaming that foreshadowed the Sixties television partnership of the Two Ronnies (Barker and Corbett). This show travelled around the provincial music halls with huge success.

In 1937 Richmond travelled to Holland to play the organ at the Palais de Danse, Scheveningen in support of the famous American black dance band led by Benny Carter. Returning home he made his first radio broadcast in the BBC's popular old time music-hall series *Palace of Varieties* (1938). This would seem somewhat out of place given Richmond's swinging style, but indicates the artist's overall abilities.

The war began, and Richmond volunteered for the Navy. Rejected for reasons of health, he was appointed organist at the Paramount cinema in Tottenham Court Road.

By night he accompanied the black singer Adelaide Hall at the Florida Nightclub, but like several similar West End venues, this was bombed.

He remained organist at the Paramount until March 1946, then crossed over to the Gaumont-British

cinema circuit travelling around London and its outskirts playing musical interludes between the films.

Richmond's main radio work began during the war, and in time he would clock up more broadcasts than any other organist, even, it is said, Sandy MacPherson. He appeared on the Sunday night spectacular *Variety Bandbox*, with his own swinging sextet on *Music While You Work*, and as a solo turn on *Navy Music*.

Also he played on the Merchant Navy's equivalent show *Shipmates Ashore*, which was hosted by Doris Hare, and filled in the gaps between film extracts on the weekly *Picture Parade*. He also

started a series of his own devising, *Organ Grinder's Swing*.

Richmond's film career was less spectacular. He played the soundtrack to a documentary short called *Animalmatics* (1940), supplying suitable times to fit the cameraman's pictures. These included "Run Rabbit Run" and "Felix Keeps On Walking".

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Marriages made in heaven?



Bishops' wives relax at Kent University, above, while Marion MacCall, below, wife of the Bishop of Willochra, takes to the air John Voss/Kent News & Pictures

They want more sex and they aren't role models. Meet the bishops' spouses. By Clare Garner

They mend aeroplanes, they need sex more than once a week and five are men. Welcome to the bishops' spouses. The stereotype of a frumpy, dependable creature, complete with bun, brooch and bonnet, whose moment of glory is starting the tape at the church fete, has been blown apart by this year's spouses' conference. Their programme has had a distinctly feminine flavour.

The Archbishop of Canterbury may like to think of them as "the natural priests of the home" around whom the family "swivels", as he told them, but most have a very different perception of themselves. Dr Carey did concede that they could also make great evangelists, but neither did that really account for the fact that some have full-time careers of their own, often earning more than their purple partners. Thankfully, Dr Carey's wife, Eileen, who put together the inspired parallel programme, did not feel restricted to domestic science.

Three years ago, she sent out questionnaires to the 800 spouses - or "spices", as they have been dubbed - who were coming to the conference. Their replies made clear that she was dealing with women who wanted to stand on their own two feet. Clearly, the only pinny many of these women would consider wearing would be the one designed by the organisation Women and the Church. The customised pink aprons bear the slogan "A woman's place is in the house - or bishops". The line has been so popular it has sold out.

Indeed, the wives turned out to be a more liberal-minded bunch than their husbands. There was a huge number of people wanting roles in the end-of-conference play based on *The Happy Prince* - a short story



written by Oscar Wilde, whose sexuality might have given the conference cause for concern. "We all latch on to one thing and forget that he was a complex man who wrote deeply," said Jo Cundy, married to the Bishop of Peterborough, as she hared across Kent University campus, late for rehearsal.

Of course, no spouses' programme (as it was renamed this year so as not to exclude the five husbands present) would be complete without its trademark "mend a mitre" and "make a kneeler" workshop, but needlework was not in the main the order of the day. The spouses were far more eager to find out what to do if the rule doesn't fit.

"The veteran juggler" workshop looked at the "challenges and frustrations that a full-time career brings to the role of being a bishop's spouse"; and "Women in the structures: our light is no longer under a bushel" speaks for itself. It was, they said, "empowering". A talk by Susan Howatch, cherished author of the "Starbridge sextet", the ecclesiastical blockbuster series, was a sell-out. Her description of the inner thoughts of one of her "harassed heroines" - a priest's wife called Rosalind - seemed to strike a chord.

Rosalind was thinking to herself: "He's always out there being wonderful to someone else," said Ms Howatch. "She provides sex on the weekends. He's too tired for it in the week. Being wonderful is a very tiring occupation." This sketch was met with roars of sex-starved approval.

But the bishops' spouses must be grateful for small mercies - such as the Lambeth Conference. Bennett Hough, wife of the Bishop of Papua New Guinea, looked up from writing her postcards home. "This is actually our honeymoon," she said. "We've been married 12 years but this is the only time we've ever been on our own for any length of time."

In many ways it has been a holiday for the bishops' spouses. There have been outings galore, day trips to the beach (where some of the women paddled in the sea for the first time), boats down the Thames and historical tours for those with a thirst for Ye Olde England.

One of the more unusual requests for workshops came from Marion MacCall, wife of the Bishop of Willochra in South Australia. She spent a day doing light aircraft maintenance at Kent's Headcorn Aerodrome. Mrs MacCall's story was enough to raise the spirits of any

downbeat bishop's wife. Six years ago she woke up to the fact that she rarely saw her husband. With a diocese stretching over an area six times the size of England, he was driving 40,000 miles a year. So what did Mrs MacCall do? She set up a fund entitled Wings Over Willochra, overcome a lifelong fear of flying and set about acquiring her pilot's licence.

When she's lost, she likes to sing hymns. "On one occasion," she told the spouses, "after singing my repertoire several times, including *Abide With Me* and *Nearer My God To Thee*, a voice came over the radio: 'Don't you know any other hymns?' I left my microphone on."

But whatever happens, her husband must watch out. In the air it is wife who has the controls. "The only domestics we have are when we are in the air," said Mrs MacCall. "We quite often fly across a large lake. One time we were going away for four days. I looked back and realised my bag was not there. My husband had forgotten to put it in. I nearly pressed the ejector button and dropped him in the drink."

A theme running throughout the conference was summed up in the title of one of the presentations by Isabel Hardy, wife of Bob Hardy, the Bishop of Lincoln: "The role and how to survive it." As a GP she has resisted the role of bishop's wife. "The less adequate the person, the more they identify with the role," she told the spouses. "They feel exposed and lost when they cannot follow one of these social automatic behaviour patterns. Their lives become more and more limited by 'playing the role', like the clergy who are never seen without a dog collar; one wonders if they wear it in bed."

Nevertheless, she had every sympathy with her fellow "spices". "Our position as spouse often makes us feel frustrated, ignored, criticised and powerless," she said, drawing on a vocabulary from cognitive psychology. She addressed the "psychological baggage" each of them brings to the role. "We may resent the popularity of the bishop and be unable to reflect and rejoice in it. We may envy him. If we feel our work is a vocation and we have to give it up because of the 'role', it is almost inevitable that we will have to struggle with resentment."

"As a spouse one must often be seen and not heard. One of the most difficult parts of being a bishop's wife is to have ideas and yet not be able to disclose them to anyone other than your husband for fear of retribution."

Among the five male spouses who arrived on the scene this year, Dr Philip Roskam, husband of Catherine Roskam, the Suffragan Bishop of New York, won the prize for being the keenest. Sauntering around campus with his red tote bag (blue for bishops, red for spouses), he was always happy to stop for a chat. But then, as it turned out, chatting is his business. As a psychotherapist with a practice on Park Avenue, he offers Freud while his wife offers God.

Since Bishop Roskam took office, Dr Roskam's life has inevitably changed - and probably in precisely the way most wives dread. "As a result of being a bishop's spouse I learned to cook," he said. "I went on a course and discovered I had a talent for it. Rack of lamb is my best dish - and soft shell crab with deep-fried parsley. When I'm stuck, I look things up in *The Joy of Cooking*."

The only activity that Dr Roskam couldn't find time for during the three-week conference was the daily keep-fit classes. Perhaps he didn't want to cramp the women's style. In which case, there's always next time. In 2008 you may not be able to move for men.

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PARK LIFE

Helpless as the boy catches the angling bait



BRUCE MILLAR

I have never seen anything glamorous in this urban angling experience but to my son it is the acme of cool

business of preparing bait and tackle, and then endlessly adjusting them if nothing bites. Which seems to me to be the equivalent of getting a horse in from the paddock, grooming it, fitting the bridle, bit and saddle and then taking the whole lot off again without riding the beast.

Nevertheless, Darcy regarded us again and again with tales of breaking the ice at the edge of the lake, of using a catapult to shoot pieces of bait across the lake - "but we nearly hit a van" - and of Danny's dad - who's (groan) "a real expert" - heating soup on a camping gas stove. The boy was clearly on his way to becoming a first-class fishing bore.

Last summer we found ourselves in Norway, where we learned a little more about fishing. Darcy's holiday treat was an evening fishing tip on a boat out in the North Sea. Also on board was a group with state-of-the-art tackle and costumes to match. Never mind, I thought, Darcy will enjoy the whole business even if he catches nothing and these experts show us how it is done. I need not have worried. The flashiest tackle counted for nothing here where a bent safety pin on a length of string would have been sufficient. Within moments, we were reeling in strings of silver mackerel, sometimes two to a hook, and cod and ling and other fish whose names we did not recognise. If fishing was always this easy, I thought, I had been caught, hook line and sinker.

This summer we are off to Turkey, and the rest of the family is dreaming of hot sun, exotic food and the warm Mediterranean sea. Not Darcy, who is marching round the house chanting "balik tutmak seviyorum", which, he says, is Turkish for "I like fishing". He has invested his life savings in a new rod, and can hardly sleep for thinking about it. Last night, as he lay awake in bed, he told my wife: "Muumuu, when I'm bigger, on my wedding anniversary I'll take my boat out on the sea at sunset and catch a fish for my wife...."

"How romantic of you," she cooed. He backed up: "No, probably I'll just go fishing with Danny."



Brian Lewis: "Thousands of history projects"

The history of life as we know it

Brian Lewis set up the Yorkshire Art Circus to help locals tell their story. By Chris Arnott

FROM WOODEN floor to corniced ceiling, one high wall of Brian Lewis's front room in Pontefract is covered with books. The other walls are covered with pictures so that hardly a square inch of wallpaper is visible. He has, at various times, been a painter and a poet as well as a teacher and an arts administrator.

But Lewis now spends much of his time in homes where full bookcases are as rare as wine racks. Indeed, he recently went into a back-to-back house in Leeds and found one slim volume on the mantelpiece, propped up between two candlesticks. He recognised it immediately as one of his own. Not his own words, but his edited collections of the memories, wry observations and random thoughts of the people who live in this street and the ones around it.

"There are thousands of oral histories projects," he says. "It's a cottage industry to give PhDs to academics. But nobody transcribes the tapes. If you give people a book, they've got something to keep and be proud of. You've got to believe that people have something to say, and

they bloody well do. Every day I'm surprised by the things they come out with."

In Castleford he asked an interviewee about local-boy-made-good Henry Moore. "He came to unveil one of his works once," the man told him, "and a dog came out of the crowd and cocked his leg up it."

"What did Henry Moore do?" asked Lewis.

"He laughed."

In Boreham Wood a re-housed Cockney told him: "If you think I'm sharp, you should have seen my granddad. He once sold a three-legged dog to a bloke in a pub on the basis that it was a rare species."

Each tenant receives a free copy produced to the standard of a paperback they could buy in WH Smith's. "Better that they can read about themselves and their neighbours than receive some brochure with no substance, produced by a PR company in London," says Lewis.

He has produced four of these books in housing renewal areas of Leeds where back-to-back houses

were built as late as the Thirties and consequently qualify for restoration rather than demolition. "One old lass told me they were ideal for people to shove a lot of leaflets through doors in a short space of time," he says. "Every so often she'd get one suggesting she extended her home with a conservatory."

He rocks with laughter at the absurdity, his great white beard shovelling up and down. At 61, he is still a bundle of enthusiastic energy. Ideas and anecdotes tumble out with just a trace of an accent from his native Birmingham. He was born in inner-city Ladywood and worked in a foundry and a brewery before training to teach. After National Service, he married and moved to his beloved West Yorkshire where, in 1960, he set up the Yorkshire Art Circus under the slogan: "Everyone has a story to tell. We find ways of helping them tell it."

He built up a team of writers capable of working at speed. On the Saturday after Michael Heseltine announced wholesale pit closures in 1982, they moved into the school hall at Grimethorpe and began taking

down the thoughts of local residents. "People talk freely when they're angry," he says. "We had 34,000 words by 4pm when we went back to start proof-reading. By 10.45 that night we were printing and by one o'clock the first copies were in the hands of union leaders to take on the march to London."

Lewis, it was who launched the professional career of the "miner" artist Harry Malkin, formerly of Frysoton Colliery, near Castleford. "The first exhibition I got him was between the till and the toilets at an Italian restaurant in Pontefract. The next was at the Royal Festival Hall."

Showing alongside Malkin's powerful charcoal sketches of life underground were stunning photographs by a former Frysoton colliery blacksmith and barber, Jack Hulme, who was in his eighties when Lewis discovered his work. "I'm world famous round here," Hulme told him and proceeded to show him a Leica camera which had cost him £32 in 1943. "I once interviewed the great Bert Hardy, a big-time photographer, and he could only afford a Leica," muses Lewis.

Chris Arnott

Char for the memories

Britain's love of the cuppa is turning cold, but a new ad campaign is trying to turn the young on to tea. By Meg Carter



Typhoo hopes its new up-beat advertising campaign, bottom right, will reverse the decline in tea-drinking and reach the parts of the younger generation that traditional campaigns have failed to reach

Britannia is too cool to drink tea. The nation's love affair with its once favourite brew has soured, research published this week shows. Busier lifestyles, the inexorable rise of the soft drink and our growing passion for America's latest cultural import - the coffee bar - are all to blame. Oh, and the fact that a growing number of us think the humble cuppa is not to put too fine a point on it, dull.

Think tea, think slippers. Dunkable digestives. Cosy kitchens. Associations with clubbing, dining out and the work-hard, play-hard ethos of today's bright young things seem tenuous, to say the least. UK tea sales have fallen by 3.5 per cent in the past five years, research from market analysts Euromonitor reveals. True, not a major collapse but just as worrying: a gradual demise.

"The market has been static, if not in decline, for the past few years," admits Chris Thomas, marketing director of Premier Brands which owns Typhoo.

"Older people are fairly well-established in their habits. When it comes to tea they've drunk the same brand day in day out for 30, 40,

50 years. Young consumers are saying tea is old hat. We need to perk it up."

Which is why Typhoo's new advertising campaign is designed to get us dancing to our kettles. Feelgood shots of everyday people doing everyday things in unusual ways are neatly choreographed to a musical accompaniment by Seventies funksters Kool and the Gang. The commercial, aimed at young housewives, marks an attempt to make tea more relevant to our time. It's a far cry from chimp in frocks.

Meanwhile, the Tea Council last month unveiled a generic logo for tea. The sun and cup motif is described by its creator, designer Ken Windsor, as: "A light-hearted bon vivant device to re-position tea in the hearts and minds of the consumer as a healthy, hearty drink."

Windsor, creative director of design company Siegel & Gale, explains that worldwide, interest in tea is flagging. The logo, likely to be introduced in the UK next year, marks an attempt to position tea as a healthy drink perfectly in tune with Nineties' lifestyles.

He's got a point. Ever since it was first invented by the Chinese and made its European debut in the mid-

16th century, tea has been revered for its health-enhancing qualities. One Anna, 7th Duchess of Bedford, is widely credited with the invention of afternoon tea when she grew tired of a certain sinking feeling that afflicted her each afternoon at around 4pm in the long, dull space between meals.

To begin with, tea was an indul-

gence restricted to monarchs and wealthy aristocrats because of cost. Soon, tea drinking - and the tea-making paraphernalia that went with it - became a statement for social climbers. Eventually, tea went mainstream, becoming a mainstay of British working life.

Even so, it was seen by some as subversive. Infuriated by the fact

that the average labourer spent around one third of his earnings on tea, William Cobbett wrote in 1822: "Tea drinking has done a great deal in bringing this nation into the state of misery in which it now is." He went on to warn against the brew's side effects: "A softness, an effeminate, a seeking for the fire side, a lurking in bed and, in short, all the characteristics of idleness." Which, of course, was part of its appeal.

Secure in the knowledge tea had become the national drink and an internationally-recognised symbol for England and the English way of life, tea companies grew complacent. True, they began to invest in "tea technology".

But despite developing square and then round tea bags, tea granules, decaffeinated tea, pyramid and draw string bags little thought was paid to attracting new generations of tea drinkers. We'd continue to drink tea because ... we always had.

Wrong. Suddenly, fizzy drinks were all the rave. Brands like Tango, Red Bull and latest newcomer Tizer kee have become lifestyle statements. And younger consumers swallowed it all, glass by glass.

"It's image-led - everyone is in-

terested in image now," laments Ilytyd Lewis, executive director of the Tea Council. "To position tea as the healthy lifestyle drink is unchallengeable." But then came London's booming coffee bar scene which, with its new vocabulary - "latte", "mocha", "double tall skinny", is now leading the nation towards more sophisticated hot drinking habits.

I bet it would be full of Japanese tourists, not people like me," adds her friend, Robert Johnson, a trainee architect: "I love a nice cuppa in the morning and that's about it. If I need picking up I'd rather drink Red Bull - preferably with a shot of vodka."

Tea is still "a big thing" at breakfast but a major loser when it comes to evening meals, says Mac Cato, chairman of brand experts Cato Consulting which has recently investigated the potential to revive the tea room. "The habits and rituals associated with tea have bred a strong sense of continuity, but never ex-

citement," he says.

Young people's lifestyles are against it, adds Ian Pierpoint, associate director of youth marketing consultancy Informer: "For a start, they're eager to turn against the conventions made by their parents," he says - which explains recent talk of declining sales of branded jeans and trainers. "Tea isn't cool. It's something you have at home, not when you're out and about."

In an attempt to grab us on the move, Brooke Bond is launching ready-to-drink PG Tips in a can - not in response to lagging consumer de-

mand but as an attempt to "keep up with consumer lifestyles", a spokeswoman for the company insists. In case you were wondering, the pre-prepared drinks are bought from a heated vending machine at 55-57C. It may sound familiar but, the company adds, tea in a can comes fresh and without the cardboard taste of familiar to frequenters of the ubiquitous Max Pack machine.

Could this remedy the younger generation's disinterest in tea? Brooke Bond certainly hopes so. In fact it predicts the UK market for hot drinks in a can could become as big as impulse ice creams.

Convenience rather than image is the key obstacle to overcome, the company believes. And it may have a point. After all, do we really want our cuppa to be exciting?

Tea may be many things - a pick me up, a soother, a comforter and (given half a chance) a cooler on a hot summer's day - but it's rarely trendy and never the cause of excitement. Tea companies have been warned. Should any feel compelled to try too hard the results would surely be unimpressive - a bit like seeing your dad hopping on the dance floor, dressed in Nike trainers and a pair of Levi's.

There's nowt as strange as folk-rock... and more than 20,000 fans are expected at Cropredy's 22nd festival next weekend

Oxford Mail

beer stalls and biryani tents. One Cropredy veteran, Mark Bennett, remembers a mystical moment when Led Zeppelin's legendary singer Robert Plant came wandering through the guy ropes.

"I was walking around the stalls one afternoon when I met him walking his dogs, an Irish wolfhound and a whippet," he said. "At first I didn't click who it was. I thought it was just some long-haired hippie. We stopped and had a good chat. Cropredy is the only place where you could do that."

But how long can it go on? Pegg turned 50 in November and the rest of the band are not far behind. "At the rate we are going it's impossible to even slow down let alone stop," affirms Pegg.

The only time the band feel old is when fans queue at the guest tent for autographs weighed down with piles of Fairport album covers and they realise just how long they have been around.

The village will not let them stop. The two pubs, craft centre and grocery store next to the canal all rely on it as their biggest money-spinner and for many locals it is the highlight of the year - a chance to let their hair down before the harvest drags them back out into the fields and the nights begin to draw in.

Perhaps Cropredy's greatest asset is that it is run by musicians not businessmen. Certainly Fairport do well out of it but money also goes to village causes and villagers do not feel they are being thrown a few pennies for their inconvenience while the lords of the manor run off with the silver.

This year's Cropredy Festival is on Friday and Saturday 14 and 15 of August.

Why this village loves its festival

For over 20 years Cropredy has embraced its rockers? By Matthew Brace

DAVID PEGG has worn well. More than 30 years of rock'n'roll have etched few lines on his face and his Brummie wit is as sharp as when he formed the seminal folk rock band Fairport Convention in 1967.

His punishing schedule puts the Rolling Stones to shame. Fairport are arguably the hardest working band in the business and in the past 12 months toured America, Germany and Italy and completed a 34-date British run.

But he is always back home in north Oxfordshire, where he lives with his wife Christine and records at his studio in a converted chapel, for one hectic and invariably drunken August weekend. This is when Fairport and a host of guest musicians gather to play their annual, two-day outdoor festival in a field on the outskirts of the village of Cropredy, three miles from Banbury.

Cropredy (pronounced Crop-eddy) is unlike any other music festival. Glastonbury in Somerset is known worldwide for its psychedelic hedonism. The Phoenix, near Stratford-upon-Avon, has a reputation for anti-social behaviour. Nearly 100 people are arrested annually for



and by all accounts the officers practically volunteer for duty to get a chance to jig around their helmets at the front of the stage.

But then Fairport have always had a good relationship with the police. They lived in a commune in 1969 with their girlfriends and an ever-growing number of unwashed roadies.

One afternoon as they relaxed in the back garden with various mind-expanding substances the local bobbies popped their heads over the wall. The band's panic turned to amazement when they realised the police had not come to raid them but to ask if they wouldn't mind playing at the police dance in a nearby field that weekend.

It was Fairport's first outdoor gig, it cost six shillings to get in and the constabulary gave them a washing machine as payment. "The police know Cropredy is a safe festival. It's the whole atmosphere here, if you like, that makes it so special," says Pegg over venison sausages and a pint of Greene King in the Deddington Arms down the road from his rural base.

"Violence and bad behaviour are just not tolerated here, it's not on, so nobody does it. You are out of place being aggressive. It has always been like that from the early days. Wonderful really, and unique as far as I know. Where else at festivals these days can you leave your tent open and not get your stereo nicked?"

The festival began in the parched summer of 1976 when Fairport organised a sing-along to raise money for a new village hall, attended by a small crowd. Last year, the band's 30th anniversary and the 21st festival, 23,000 fans turned up, quaffed 61,000 pints of beer and watched a series of talented folk and rock acts, ending with Fairport playing a four-hour finale under a harvest moon.

"Not bad for a bunch of old farts," says Pegg, and not bad for a group who admit that they have always been one of the least marketable in the music business.

Cropredy is a home-grown festi-

EDINBURGH
98

A major retrospective of the shocking, uncompromising work of the late Alan Clarke shows just why the reputation of this courageous director continues to grow. By Geoffrey Macnab

King of the hooligan element

A SULLEN-LOOKING teenage girl turns down a suburban street and keeps on walking. She walks and walks and walks. Eventually, she reaches a friend's house. We see her standing in the kitchen beside him. They look as if they are about to do the washing-up. In fact, they are getting ready to shoot up. As soon as the syringe is ready, in a matter-of-fact way, they take off their belts and tighten them around their arms. The fix over, the groggy teenager walks back down the street. The process - walk, fix, walk - is repeated again and again. This, in a nutshell, is *Christine*, Alan Clarke's 50-minute TV drama from 1986 about drug addiction. One watches it with mounting fascination. When is something going to happen? The answer is never.

Think of Clarke and the images which probably spring to mind are Ray Winstone slugging Phil Daniels with a sock full of billiard balls in *Scum* (1977). Gary Oldman orchestrating casual football violence in *The Firm* (1989), or Tim Roth as a skinhead swaggering down the middle of the road, sneering at the passing traffic, in *Made in Britain* (1983). On the face of it, Clarke, who died in 1990, was the most macho and belligerent of film-makers. He loathed authority and it showed. Even when he was making a costume drama, the bile came out. In his 1978 adaptation of Büchner's play, *Danton's Death*, you half suspect he regarded the prissy, bloodless bureaucrat Robespierre (Ian Richardson) as an 18th-century counterpart to Alasdair Milne, the BBC Director-General who had refused to allow *Scum* to be shown the year before.

If Robespierre is a ringer for Milne, Danton, the boisterous revolutionary is not so very far removed from Clarke. He was not the typical TV drama director who gravitated to the Beeb via public school and Oxbridge. Instead, he was the working-class hero (or hooligan) who relished terrorising his bosses. He played the part almost to the point of self-parody. Richard Kelly's new book about him is full of stories of Clarke dancing naked on the bar in the BBC canteen, Clarke urinating out of windows or being thrown out of restaurants, or Clarke being arrested for drunk and disorderly behaviour. He was once even banned from using the BBC lifts, something which you cannot quite imagine happening to the sainted Ken Loach.

Of course, if Clarke had been nothing but a hooligan with an eye for a well-composed shot, he would hardly have achieved the acclaim which is belatedly coming his way. His antics might have been remembered fondly by his crews, but the films themselves would hardly have last-



Boys behaving badly: it was with his uncompromising 1977 film 'Scum' that Alan Clarke (below) burst upon the scene



ed. Perhaps, though, what shines through even more than his antagonism for authority is his affection for the downtrodden, non-descript characters ignored by most film-makers. *Christine* is a perfect example. Its heroine (Vicky Meldrew) is not the archetypal addict. We do not see her sweating or suffering withdrawal symptoms like Christine F. Nor is there any of the high jinks you find in *Trainspotting*. She is a plain, reserved teenager trying to ward off boredom. Clarke does not moralise about her any more than about the trainspotter in *The Lost Train Through The Harecastle Tunnel* (1971), or the adolescent terrified he has come face to face with the devil in *Pendle's Fen* (1973).

Such films are corrective to the idea that Clarke was only happy showing skinheads and Borsalino boys. He was one of the pioneers of in-your-face stedicam film-making. In *Made in Britain*, the hand-held camera reflects the violence and restlessness of the Tim Roth character in a film which almost seems fuelled by testosterone. But Clarke could show restraint and sensitivity. In *Christine*, the hand-held camera captures perfectly the monotony of the lead's ex-

istence. *Road* (1987), Clarke's adaptation of Jim Cartwright's play, marries the two styles: youngsters strutting through the streets to the accompaniment of Gene Vincent counterpointed with battered housewives and old-timers marching forward along, knowing they are going nowhere. When needs be, Clarke has the confidence to hold a shot for what seems like a grim eternity.

"He was the actor's dream, one of those directors who would go all the way for you," remembers writer-di

rector David Leland, who first met Clarke on the set of a BBC Play for the Month in the 1970s and went on to write three films for him (*Psy Warriors*, *Beloved Enemy* and *Made in Britain*). Clarke was unpopular within the BBC, not only because of the controversial subject matter he was drawn to, but because of his working methods. He often cast unknowns and kept his writers on set throughout shooting, something which was unheard of. In other words, he refused to play the corporate game.

Eight years after his death, Clarke is being talked up as one of the great British post-war film-makers. "A poet for all those beasts who pace and measure the limits of their cages," writes David Thomson in his *Biographical Dictionary of Cinema*. "Definitely the best of all the British new wave," proclaims Harmony Korine, the young American writer-director of the clearly Clarke-influenced *Gummo*. Lizzie Francke, the director of the Edinburgh Film Festival who has programmed a retrospective of his work, describes him as "the Robert Bresson of British cinema" - the face of an unlikely compliment for a working-class Liverpudlian and diehard Everton fan (his son is the footballer, Gabriel Clarke) who did most of his work for television.

"Posthumous fame," the critic Hannah Arendt once wrote, "is less arbitrary and often more solid than the other sorts, since it is only seldom bestowed upon mere merchandise."

In Clarke's case, Arendt's observation seems particularly apt. His films attracted minimal audiences when they were first shown, but as time passes, their quality becomes increasingly apparent. They will last.

Ray Winstone and Tim Roth are both expected in Edinburgh to talk about working with Clarke. It would be a pity, though, if *Scum* and *Made in Britain*, the two films in which they appeared, are allowed to overshadow the rest of the retrospective. Stylistically, much of Clarke's other work is equally, if not more, interesting. Watching "late Clarke", one has the impression of a technique refined to such a degree that he no longer needs to rely on the contrivances of plot and character. Two dramas, in particular, stand out: *Contact* (1984) and *Elephant* (1988). Both deal with Northern Ireland. The former, shot in semi-documentary style, follows a British army platoon on patrol in Crossmaglen. There is virtually no dialogue other than the orders the commander (Sean Chapman) bellows to his men. For most of the film, all we see is soldiers tramping across fields and elbowing through bracken. The soldiers are on edge and so are we. Snipers may be lurking over the brow of each hill. The finale, in which Chapman prowls around a car which may be booby-trapped, is excruciating. Clarke shoots it in long-shot, at microscopic pace, creating an almost unbearable tension.

Elephant, which was produced by Danny Boyle of *Trainspotting* fame, is even more extraordinary. Clarke has stripped the film of all the usual cartilage. There are no characters as such, no plot. Instead, we watch a series of cold-blooded murders. Again, Clarke heightens the tension by refusing to cut. He will show an assassin, dressed like a businessman, walking hundreds of yards, finding his target, shooting him in the head, and then walking back again. Violence encroaches everywhere. A man out for a stroll in the park is murdered. A garage attendant is murdered. A youth playing football is murdered. A man in overalls cleaning up swimming pool changing rooms is murdered. The point, Boyle has said, was to show "the ignorant mainland" the remorselessness of the violence.

Elephant is, literally, a short film about killing. It is a moot point whether or not it works - without a sense of place or a political context, it cannot help but seem a cold and abstract exercise. Nevertheless, the audacity is breathtaking. That Clarke was prepared to risk making it goes a long way to explaining why he is so revered. Nobody else would have had the courage.

The Alan Clarke retrospective runs throughout this year's Edinburgh Film Festival. Richard Kelly's book, *Alan Clarke*, is published on 24 August by Faber, £12.99 paperback.

The flavour of the Fringe, Michael Jackson, page 23

EXIT POLL

VOODOO LOUNGE,
LEICESTER SQUARE,
LONDON

I LIKE IT, it's nicely decorated and I like the Terry O'Neill photographs. The one of Terence Stamp and Jean Shrimpton I want. I want to join, but the membership is full up. The licensing hours are good, the furniture is great, and even the toilets are nice. I'll be coming back. I just hope they don't have an arsey door policy because the bouncer was giving it the big 1-2 and I don't think London needs another place like that.

Lancelet Narragan, 29, press officer, London

IT'S REALLY lovely. It's very soothing. It's obviously early days for the staff but they look great. And the licensing hours are great. It's for the discerning drinker and even though it's in the heart of London, you would feel comfortable bringing your other half here. A lot of bars around the centre you wouldn't because of men ogling.

Colin Tyrer, 27, restaurant manager, London

I THINK THE way they have put the thing together in terms of the lighting and the styling, is extremely well done. This is really comfortable, though you feel slightly under-dressed. It is a really impressive building. It's more intimate than the Atlantic, which is like a factory. I like the individual sections; their different shapes give the place an intimate atmosphere.

Pip Charsley, 33, manager, London

THE FIRE EFFECT behind the bar is really amazing. I also like the music because I am a bit fed up with the boom-boom-boom; here, you can chat and enjoy the music at the same time. I love the lift and the fact that they have kept the original features. I was expecting more leopard-skin warmth. Everything is white so it kind of freezes you.

Henrietta Rendle, 29, tour guide, London

I DON'T REALLY see Mick Jagger choosing this for his home: he's definitely done this for tax reasons. It's cool. I would come back. This bar is nicer than the VIP bar; I don't want to go there. It has little tiny chairs, you have to sit up straight rather than lounge."

James Farmer, 24, publishing executive, London

Stop the week - I'm in the grip of Saturday Night Fry

LET'S TALK seriously for a moment. In the interval of Thursday's early evening Prom, which included a piece by the more or less forgotten English composer John Foulds, Malcolm MacDonald presented a small feature claiming him as a forgotten master. Look, he said, the man wrote a vast *World Requiem*, in memory of the dead of the First World War, which lasted two hours, had 1200 performers, and was for some years regularly performed on Armitage Night at the Albert Hall. "That would seem to mark him out as a deeply serious composer," MacDonald reckoned.

Well, yes, in one sense I suppose

it does, but was he really arguing that seriousness of subject-matter is a valid measure of artistic worth?

Sickness, the absence of friends, those occasions that mark the passing of childhood and the arrival of responsibility, birth, death, marriage - you don't get weightier themes than these, but that doesn't necessarily mean the people who write rhymes about them inside greetings cards should get their names into *The Oxford Companion to 20th Century Poetry*.

Which brings us to Stephen Fry's new chat-show *Saturday Night Fry* (Radio 4, Saturday, obviously). After the peculiarly nauseating

intellectual host, with pre-scripted witticisms, and a group of smart guests that included Laurie Taylor, my God, could the buggers really have brought back *Stop The Week*?

If it sticks around long enough, it may sink that far, but at the moment there is a neurotic energy to Fry's chairmanship, and a tension created by the sheer quantity and diversity of guests, that keeps it zinging along. Arnold Wesker talked about his latest play and how it had been kept out of theatres by management's timidity (read: "Quality control"); Tom Baker talked about growing old and the dangers of Viagra to men with an overlarge

"skittle" ("I've been sucking on Skittles all day," quipped Fry, who seems to have whooshed from monkish inhibition to Julian Clary-esque camp); John Sessions did pointless impressions, which sounds like half of a fairly apposite cleric; Sinead O'Connor sang a song about the children of Rwanda and showed a touching inability to finish any sentence without making reference to her awful childhood; and there were Anthony Clare, Laurie Taylor, Jonathan Miller, discussing whether happiness can be rooted in the individual.

Clearly, this is another serious subject; but the seriousness was undermined by the fact that the one factor uniting all the guests was vanity; they can't get much more frivolous and pointless than that.

Early on, Fry worried at some length about the dangers of pretentiousness, before dismissing the problem - "It's pretentious to be afraid of pretension". Well, call me pretentious, then, but this little celebration of the joys of being famous enough to have an opinion seems to have the willies out of me. But it gripped me too, as headlights grip a rabbit.

Fry's charmed circle of celebrity contrasted cheerfully with the outcasts Jenny Cuffe met in the first

part of *In This Together* (Radio 4, Monday), a series on social exclusion. The programme started with a quotation from Tony Blair - "I don't want there to be any forgotten people in the Britain we're going to build". Cuffe found signs of hope on the Pennywell Estate in Sunderland; but she also found people who had slipped off the bottom of the ladder, for whom Blair's inclusive enthusiasm seemed to have found no room. You imagine him clearing his desk at No 10 in five or 10 years' time, slapping himself on the forehead and crying out:

"Bugger! Why didn't somebody remind me about the poor?"

WORK IN PROGRESS

ARJ BARKER, COMEDIAN

People can sit back and think, 'Wow!'



Mean and moody: Arj Barker

Arj Barker won a Perrier Award for Best Newcomer at last year's Edinburgh Festival, and returns this year

All set?

Absolutely. I've been preparing for at least a couple of hours and I think it's coming together but it's very scary until you get to do the show. I did a preview last night, to a nearly sold-out audience. It was very playful and there was a spontaneous feel to it. We had a lot of fun.

So you'll be sticking to that form? No, not really.

New material?

I'd say that the show is 85 per cent brand new, and what's old has been improved upon. Last year I had more of a structure, in that I was supposed to have just gotten to England for the first time and I was very naive. That gets unrealistic I'm still naive, but that's just because of how my character is - kinda dumb. But I'm

also more used to England. A lot of people think I'm English.

You mean the Scots do? No, they think I'm Scottish. Of course, all this is only until I open my mouth. Then they think I'm English and want to beat me up. (Only kidding.)

Other changes? I've been getting more into acting because I want to convey emotion, even if it's something as ludicrous as talking about a bar of soap. The classic subjects are still in there - dating and so on - but this year people can expect to sit back a couple of times during my show and think "Wow! That made something stir inside my chest". They may just be gas pains, but it also may be because Arj Barker is trying to say something that matters.

Any clues? There's a true story, for instance, where I was ordering a Big Mac at

a drive-thru in the countryside, and a cow had wandered up the fence just next to my car. I won't give away the ending but it was a very emotionally charged moment and I think a lot of people are going to feel that. It's a little like the story of the homeless woman I did last year: I'm on my way to a show and see her picking up cans so she can sell them for two cents a can, and I think "Is this fair?" Then I ask the audience if it's fair and they say of course it's not. In the end I have to tell myself "Damn it, Arj, you go to the show. There'll be plenty of time for collecting when you get back. That woman is aged and weak, she can't get them all!" I like stories that sound poignant but end up ridiculous.

Do you know any Beckham jokes? No, I'm afraid he'll kick me.

Arj Barker's show plays at the Pleasance Theatre, Edinburgh (0131-556 6550), until 31 August

INTERVIEW BY NICK FEARN

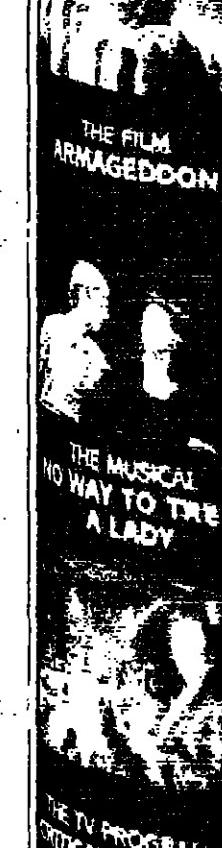
CLASSIC CARTOONS

MARTIN PLIMMER ON DAVID GHILCHIK



A MOMENT that would pass unnoticed by most, certainly not to merit immortalisation, is vividly worked into our emotions by painter and illustrator David Ghilchik in this 1923 Punch cartoon. Here on the balmyest of afternoons is the sweetest of little boys, his supplicant hands placed just-on-the-knee of the coolest of mothers. (We note, with a sigh, that she is wearing unsuitable shoes.) Here, too, is HIM, with a right leg that dares all, the neck of bull and also

the swimming costume of a bull, striding off to invade France before tea. They just don't make characters like that any more. We have to admire him; so must the boy; so must the mother whose desirable gaze, unashamedly, he also commands.



EXIT
POUL

Cabaret is live and kicking again thanks to acts like the Callaway girls – and now London has its chance to say thank you. By David Benedict

Sisters at diva pitch

SINGLED-HANDEDLY, exactly 12 years ago, singer Barbara Cook reigned the London cabaret scene when she entranced audiences at the Donmar Warehouse. On the back of reviews you couldn't pay for – "for two hours I thought I'd died and gone to heaven," swooned one – she sailed into the West End and has been conducting a two-way love affair with London ever since. The hot news is that she's back.

The art of cabaret is about intimacy. Cook's musical honesty is strong enough to draw you in at a gregarious venue such as the Albert Hall, scene of her 70th birthday bash last November; but seeing her up close and personal is completely different. Tickets are simply vanishing from the Donmar box office, but, if you can't get in, there's more where that came from in the rest of the Donmar's Divas season.

Cook's week-long engagement is immediately followed by Imelda Staunton. Anyone who saw her sensational Miss Adelaide in the National's *Gypsy and Dolls* is likely to sell their grandmother for a ticket to see her fronting a brassy 10-piece big band. But first up is the London debut of sister act Ann Hampton Callaway and Liz Callaway.

With dreams of being an actress, Ann hit Manhattan three days after Liz in September 1979, and, on their first night, they walked from their "horrible hotel" into a piano bar across the street. "This pianist was asking for requests and someone suggested something and he said 'Oh I can't sing that'. But I was 21 so I said 'I can'. But then he couldn't play it so I said 'I can play it too'. So I sang 'Sometime When We Touch', got a miniature standing ovation and

a job playing there six hours a night. And my piano playing was terrible. I only knew 20 songs but these people were such alcoholics they didn't notice." And within 18 months she was making the first of countless appearances at the famed Algonquin.

These days, her shelves groan beneath the weight of truckloads of cabaret awards for her appearances across the country, not to mention her songwriting which she claims "came out of desperation and being a morose adolescent". She threw a black-tie Martini party at her home

'My piano was terrible and I only knew 20 songs, but these people were such alcoholics they didn't notice'

when Barbra Streisand's latest album was released. Why? Because after 10 years of trying to get a song to her, Streisand recorded it. The album charted at number one and she positively purrs at the mention of the forthcoming royalties.

Over here, her reputation rests on a couple of well-reviewed seasons at Pizza on the Park, but Londoners have yet to meet the kid sister. Not that Liz is exactly an unknown quantity. When Barbara Cook sang Sally in the star-studded, impossibly glamorous live concert version of Sondheim's *Follies*, Liz played the younger Sally. Her career trajectory too had been pretty swift. "I knew I

had talent but I also knew I had a lot to learn. I wanted to be in the chorus of a Broadway show within three years. That seemed a reasonable goal."

In fact, it took just one year for her to be cast in Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along*. During rehearsals she'd met lyricist Richard Maltby Jnr and after *Merrily* flopped he cast her in the lead in his cult show *Baby*, giving her the best song, the soaring second act knockout "The Story Goes On". Since then, she's been doing very nicely, thank you, singing the key role of the American wife in *Miss Saigon*, recording solo albums and lending her voice to the soundtrack of the animated *Anastasia*. In between times she and Ann have occasionally managed to make their packed diaries coincide to perform together in *Sibling Revelry*.

On a hot Manhattan afternoon, the two are horsing around in a rehearsal studio, cheerfully upstaging each other as they fine-tune their evening of duets and solos. At one point, they hurl themselves into a theatrical medley to rival Ethel Merman and Mary Martin, covering everything from the predictable "Sisters", through to the famous Garland/Streisand big-band arrangement of "Get Happy" and "Happy Days Are Here Again".

Sandwiched in-between is a snatch of the dramatic "A Boy Like That" from *West Side Story*. Ann grows, raising herself to her full 5ft 10in. "Look, if this is melodrama, I really should play melodrama..." "Oh no," begs Liz, "please..." "Divas they may be, self-important they're not." As Ann tells it, the differences between them are that while growing up "Liz read Nancy Drew mysteries,

I read Dorothy Parker. She listened to the Monkees, I listened to Miles Davis". That explains the jazz inflections of Ann's vocal style. She has both a phenomenal three-octave range and an uncanny ability to impersonate everything from a tenor sax to a high trumpet.

As for the Dorothy Parker note, it sums up her laconic wit. Liz is the more optimistic of the two, a quality that translates into an appealingly fresh, hopeful sound. It's also a dramatic voice, so it's slightly surprising to learn that she doesn't really like doing solo work. "If the whole of *Sibling Revelry* were duets I'd be really happy." Audiences thrill to her powerhouse rendition of Stephen Schwartz's "Meadowlark" are likely to disagree.

Yet cabaret singing is largely considered to be a dying form. The classic American songbook has been betrayed by schmoozy lounge acts. The almost forgotten marriage of musical and textual truth is at the heart of the Divas at the Donmar season. "What we do is kind of rare these days," concedes Ann. "You get up, you plant your feet on stage, you sing. And they can see everything that's going on inside of you. There's nothing fake in this type of performance. You can't lie."

The Callaways' success back home proves the existence of a growing audience for this kind of intimacy. If they have anything to do with it, London will respond in the same way.

Divas at the Donmar: The Callaways are in "Sibling Revelry", 10-22 August; Barbara Cook (24-29 August); Imelda Staunton (1-5 Sept) (0171 369 1732)



Liz (left) and Ann Callaway, square up for a stint at the Donmar in 'Sibling Revelry'

Composer, producer, Avenger: just don't call him a polymath

Laurie Johnson's TV theme tunes are classics. So why has it taken 27 years for a serious piece to get its premiere? By Meg Carter

IT'S TAKEN Laurie Johnson some 27 years to get round to staging the first public performance of his 1971 composition, *Synthesis*. Better late than never: the symphony will finally be performed by the London Big Band and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall tomorrow night.

The delay, however, is hardly surprising: Johnson has had rather a lot on his plate. The veteran composer and producer, who learnt his trade with Jack Parnell among others, has since composed in almost every conceivable musical form. His film work includes the score for Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove*. Among his TV compositions are memorable themes for *This Is Your Life*, *The Professionals* and *The Avengers* – the music for which is the only original element to feature in Warner Brothers' remake. His numerous theatre credits include the music for *Lock Up Your Daughters*.

In recent years, Johnson's activities have been influenced by his own TV and film production interests. In partnership with Brian Clemens, he owns the rights to *The Professionals* and is executive producer of this year's TV re-make. In partnership with John Hough, he co-owns Gainsborough Pictures which owns the TV

rights to Dame Barbara Cartland's novels. And that's not to mention his latest musical project – *The Glory Road*, a musical based on the story of Moses. His latest project, currently in development, is Boz – a musical on the life of Charles Dickens.

"I've been called a polymath – I wasn't sure whether to laugh or sue," he smiles. "But I suppose you could say my interests and various projects seem disparate. In fact, while the springboard may differ, my music is the common theme."

He now writes only for his own productions, which gives him the freedom to indulge his passions, especially for big band music. "It's a sound many younger people had never been exposed to," he says. "It has become particularly popular in the US following the success of Harry Connick Jnr and Natalie Cole. So we brought together the best jazz and orchestral musicians from across Europe, including Don Lusher and Tommy Whittle, to perform the music not catered for by the orchestra, whether pop or more established."

So far, the London Big Band has played at the Palladium and the Barbican, where it was filmed for a video which became a number one seller at Tower Records in London. John-

son's aim is to broaden the appeal of big band music. And he is doing so by composing music which challenges conventional musical genres.

The Glory Road, for example, was first performed last year by the London Big Band and a full gospel choir. With lyrics by Herbert (Les Misérables) Kretzmer, the narration was provided by Hollywood veteran James Coburn. "His voice had the quality and timbre perfectly suited to American gospel", Johnson says. Sunday night's concert involves jazz

and symphony musicians with a contemporary twist – pop musicians, and a 23-year-old soul singer, Alexa, will also join them on stage.

The evening is in two parts: the first half a tribute to Gershwin, the second the first live performance of

"The best were totally integrated with all parts of the film. Music is cinema. It plays on the subconscious and manipulates an audience. Themes play very little part in it – you couldn't hum the score to *Citizen Kane*, yet music made a significant contribution to it. This is a different approach to grafting on music only to make money through sales of the soundtrack."

The best scores tell stories that pictures can't, he adds. Boz, inspired by a life-long enthusiasm for Dickens, focuses on the author's life – the inspiration for all of his stories. "It's a story never told. The story of a man who was many people. And the music takes it to a new dimension." Johnson has completed and recorded the score, and Kretzmer the lyrics. He is unsure how it will first be performed, live or on film, but funding has already been secured with the support of Lord Grade.

The Professional: The Best of Laurie Johnson and *The Musical Worlds of Laurie Johnson* are out this week on PolyGram's Redial label. The first performance of *Synthesis* takes place tomorrow at the Royal Festival Hall (0171-960 4242). Warner Brothers' *The Avengers* opens on 14 August

Laurie Johnson, right, who wrote the theme music for 'The Avengers' (above)

and symphony musicians with a contemporary twist – pop musicians, and a 23-year-old soul singer, Alexa, will also join them on stage.

The evening is in two parts: the first half a tribute to Gershwin, the second the first live performance of



Synthesis. All his work is written with international appeal in mind, Johnson explains. "You can't afford to be parochial. I never write for a particular audience – you have to ask 'Will people want to listen to this, anywhere in the world?' Take *The Avengers*: worldwide it had TV audiences of 500 million, it regularly attracted around 18 million in the UK."

He is also driven by the desire to blend music and performance. He points to classic film music scores:

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

BY NICK FEARN

OVERVIEW	CRITICAL VIEW	ON VIEW	OUR VIEW
THE FILM ARMAGEDDON 	A weary Ryan Gilbey reported that "this deeply stupid film purports to be a tender love story, a meaty action-adventure and a global disaster movie. Quite bafflingly it often struggles to be all these things at once". To <i>The Times</i> it was "so thoroughly, vigorously childish that it becomes almost endearing". Almost. <i>The Guardian</i> admitted that it offers "a relatively superior version of contemporary comic book film-making," but advised: "Leave your brain at home". <i>The Daily Telegraph</i> damned with faint praise: "In the blockbuster stakes of this joyless summer, <i>Armageddon</i> , with its special effects savvy and sense of humour, should take the palm." The only detectable enjoyment was evinced by the <i>Daily Mail</i> when a "supposedly tear-jerking moment reduced me to tears of helpless laughter".	Armageddon was released yesterday, cert 12, 150 minutes	Attempting to succeed where <i>Deep Impact</i> failed, <i>Armageddon</i> is already the biggest action hit of the year in the States, and there is no reason to think our taste is any better. We thought we had suffered enough, but Hollywood shall not flag or falter, it shall go on to the end. In the words of St John the Divine in Revelation, Lord come quickly.
THE MUSICAL NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY 	Despite the "ugly" set and "proficient, rather than inspired, score", the "attractively game" cast contrive, judged Paul Taylor to deliver "a pretty pleasurable way of treating an audience". The set is "cheap looking", sniffed the <i>Daily Mail</i> , deeming the show "distinctly average". <i>The Financial Times</i> found the tone of the piece "hard to fathom"; though "it's best it is wonderfully corny, revelling in its own bad taste". It decreed that it was "a light comedy about a serial murderer and before long the comedy sticks in your throat". <i>No Way to treat an audience either</i> , quipped <i>The Times</i> , finding itself "in central London's tackiest theatre for a show it would be kindest to call amateurish". Lamenting the "waste of talent", <i>The Times</i> also rounded on the "makeshift looking" set.	No Way to Treat a Lady plays at the Arts Theatre, Great Newport Street, London. Tue-Sat 8pm, mats Sat & Sun 4pm, ends 23 August. £12.50-£20.	Some nagging sub-Sondheim tunes and lyrics may fall short of the Great American Musical, and the cast, whose performances have genuine merit, certainly deserve a better set. The production would benefit from some attention, but on the other hand, it is at least as good as some of the Lloyd Webber fare in London's West End.
THE TV PROGRAMME CRITICAL CONDITION 	Thomas Sutcliffe found it "undeniably entertaining", though he mischievously suggested "that this was the critical establishment we were watching, rather than some incidental players covering a scene well known for its incestuousness". Of the series, he noted that "All the critics who might have given a more sensible account of what they do were far too sensible to take part". Quite, agreed <i>The Guardian</i> . "Didn't anyone ever explain to these nincompoops that you're not supposed to tell everyone what a cushy, cosy racket the critic's life is?" <i>The New Statesman</i> applauded the "deadly accurate assassination" of Shuttleworth. And the verdict of <i>The Financial Times</i> itself? "This is a typically entertaining show and Shuttleworth should be commended on his bravery in agreeing to appear."	Critical Condition was the first in a four-part series on Channel 4, Weds. The next episodes focus on critics of opera (Rodney Milnes and the <i>Evening Standard's</i> Tom Sutcliffe), film (Chris Tooke) and theatre (Nicholas de Jongh and Michael Coveney).	A stitch-up by all accounts, Shuttleworth's loss is great television's gain. Ronson himself is good value, raising laughs himself as easily as he exploits the subject. The next installments should be compulsive viewing if the deadpan hatchet jobs continue. Critic-baiting has become far more subtle since the days when John Osborne would trip them up in the aisles.

Is there a doctor in the hut?

Seeing an African witch doctor at work puts our own rural problems into focus. By Duff Hart-Davis

Even before he put on his *ngalila*, the *n'ganja*, or witch doctor, had a disconcerting air for his dark protuberant eyes were turned slightly outwards, so that he never appeared to be looking at the person he was addressing.

But according to his official citation, supplied and signed by the local Zambian district council, he was respectability personified. "Mr Nyirenda is a true herbalist," this document proclaimed. "The medicine he is using is not dangerous, but for curing, and he is doing very fine."

Nevertheless, when he donned a long, blood-red cotton robe, and a muffin-shaped hat of the same colour, fringed with yellow, his appearance became somewhat sinister. Diagonally across his torso, he slung several strings of beads. On his chest hung a small, beaded casket and in either hand he held a widebeest tail – a hank of shiny black hair a foot long, bound with rings of white and crimson and with yellow beads at the root.

Thus equipped, he took up position in the middle of a small grass hut. On his right stood an assistant, holding a tattered Bible open in both hands, as if reading the lesson in church. I and my two companions squatted on the ground in a corner.

When the first patient of the day – a hefty young woman – came and stood in front of the *n'ganja*, he began to swish one of the widebeest tails fast up and down with his left hand, holding the handle of the other to his right temple, while keeping his eyes tightly shut.

"He is calling the spirits," explained Sanford, our guide. Faster, hypnotically faster, went the swishing tail, up and down, up and down. Falsetto gibbering began to pour from the witch doctor's mouth. "Can you understand what he's saying?" I whispered. Sanford shook his head. "The spirits are speaking to him."

For several minutes the torrent of squeaky utterances continued, ascending

higher and higher until it sounded like birds twittering. Occasionally the *n'ganja* held both tails in his left hand, and with his right made precise, clawing movements at the air. Then, for the benefit of the girl, the assistant began to interpret in the local language, and Sanford translated for us: "The trouble is in your stomach. It can be cured. I will make medicine to purge it. You must take the medicine I give you..."

In five minutes the consultation was finished. The patient handed over 5,000 kwachas – about £1.50 – which, in her terms, was a considerable sum, and went off looking thoughtful. But it took the witch doctor some time to wind down from his trance, which he finally seemed to throw off by rolling his neck backwards and giving several loud grunts of "Oh!"

Then, on their knees, he and the assistant began sorting through a litter of sticks and roots, broken into short lengths, which lay on the rush matting at the back of the hut. As they pushed different kinds of wood into heaps, Sanford steadily translated their comments: "This bark ground up and put in your porridge, is for the ladies, to keep their bodies warm for a man. It keeps men strong also. This one is for back pain, this one for the stomach."

Soon it became clear that the doctor had medicines not only for physical ailments, but for psychological ones as well. Besides normal illness, he could ward off spells put on people by a *fifi*, or sorcerer. "The *mwanja* creeper is to stop witchcrafts coming into your house; the *babuguru* bush gets rid of spirits."

Outside, in the hot sunshine of the Zambian winter morning, it would have been easy to dismiss all this as mumbo-jumbo. But the point is that, in his own environment, the witch doctor's remedies work. With no recourse to Western doctors or medicine, people rely on him absolutely, and – whether through the chemical properties of his potions, or through auto-suggestion – many of them are cured of their ailments.

By Western standards, his village is desperately poor. The people live in grass huts, without electricity or sanitation, and their water has to be fetched from a stream two kilometres away. Their diet consists almost exclusively of maize, which they dry, grind and cook into a kind of porridge. Their circular, grass-walled stores, raised on stilts to keep out termites, are frequently raided by elephants. The nearest hospital is 20 miles away, but most people have no means of reaching it; and even though a few rural clinics have

been established, they lack most basic equipment and drugs.

"We depend heavily on traditional doctors," said Joseph Mwansa, headmaster of the school in Mwizala, another village close by. "Without them, many of us wouldn't have reached the age of 25."

Parents are supposed to contribute two dollars per annum for each child attending his establishment, but in practice the families have so little money that this year only 60 of the 320 pupils have been paid for. "We are born in poverty and grow old in poverty," he said

cheerfully, "but we can't get ashamed of it, because it's not a thing of our making."

One cause for optimism is that money from wildlife tourism in the South Luangwa National Park, whose eastern boundary is close by, has now started filtering through to local communities. Instead of being creamed off by central government, Mwizala has benefited not only from an official scheme, but also from the generosity of Robin and Jo Pope, who run tourist camps and walking safaris in the park.

The village, in consequence, has a supply of clean water from its own borehole – an incalculable benefit but it is still looking for funds to buy modest extras such as mosquito nets for visitors to sleep under, and a volleyball for the school.

For anyone caught up in arguments about rural conservation in Britain, it is a salutary experience to visit a country where rats, boiled whole and dried in the sun, are regarded as rare delicacies, and where the idea of set-aside – of paying farmers not to grow food – is not merely incomprehensible, but manifestly insane.



Brian Boyd/Colorific!

Physician, heal thyself: does your local GP look like this?

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEKEND



GET SWASHBUCKLING in Surrey this weekend at Birdworld Park and Gardens, which is holding a Treasure Island Fun Day. Pirates, complete with parrot companions, will be mingling with visitors in the picnic area, set among 26 acres of parkland. You can also see penguins, ostriches, herons and alligators – although hopefully the latter are not too heavily involved in the Animal Encounter Sessions. Refreshments will be served at Puddleducks Restaurant and the Safari Stack Bar.

Treasure Island Fun Day is on Sunday 9 August from 9.30am to 6pm at Birdworld, Holt Pound, Farnham, Surrey.

For 24-hour information, call 01420 22838. The cost is £6.95 for adults, £3.75 for children and £5.50 for senior citizens or disabled.

SALLY KINBERG

Be a wild child for the night

Owls, bats and a 'smelly' cocktail party.
Nikki Spencer got back to nature in Devon.

AS WE enter the woods our guide, Chris Salisbury, tells us to pause for a moment before we step off the beaten track. "We ask you to unburden yourselves of one thing, one reminder of the world you are about to leave behind – your watch. This," he says, smiling, "symbolises your willingness to participate in everything thrown at you." And he opens a green velvet bag, and we give up the next 18 hours of our time.

"He's Robin Hood really," someone quips, and easily he could certainly pass as a modern-day version, with his naturally-coloured clothes and his shoulder-length hair, topped with one of those wide-brimmed hats you see people wearing on BBC2 survival programmes.

It's 6pm on a Saturday night, and 25 of us – assorted families, couples and friends aged from about five to 50 – are about to go on a "wild night out", an event run on a nature reserve in the Dart valley by the Devon Wildlife Trust.

The "nights out" started a few years ago as a way of encouraging local schoolchildren to take a new look at their environment, and are now run every summer, and can be joined by members of the public from all over the country.

We've been told to bring outdoor gear, a sleeping bag and a torch, plus "a healthy appetite and a mind clear of preconceptions". The night, Chris explains, will be divided into four walks of about an hour and a half to two hours each. One to our campsite, one after dinner, one rather alarmingly scheduled for before breakfast and one after it.

The first we embark on is an Earthwalk, of the kind pioneered in the Seventies as an antidote to the rather staid nature rambles of the

day. Sensory awareness is the name of the game. Chris is carrying two ancient wicker baskets, covered with rather tweed checked tea towels. Whenever he stops, he pulls out a different set of props. At one point he has us all walking in a crocodile, one hand on the shoulder of the person in front, holding mirrors at an angle so we can look up at the trees. At another he is hosting a "smelly cocktail party". We collect the most pungent and aromatic things we can find and then return to the group for a mass sniffing session.

Our base for the night is a small clearing by the river and, although the event may be billed as "wild", roughing it is not on the agenda. When we arrive at the camp we are introduced to four volunteers from the trust who will cook our food (organic, vegetarian and locally grown), help us put our tents up if necessary (certainly necessary in my case) and generally make our stay more pleasant by giving out such home comforts as roll-up mats should we require them (my daughter Ella and I somehow manage to get two each).

The reward for our endeavours is not only a fantastic view over the whole valley as the sun comes up but also an early morning snack that is almost too beautiful to eat. On the heather Chris and the volunteers have laid out a blanket and covered it with slices of melon, orange, and grapes, surrounded with candles and flowers. Our "wild night out" has been a feast in many different ways.

Devon Wildlife Trust are running Wild Nights Out on 15 August and 5 September. Adults £30; children £18.75; family group (two adults, two children) £80. They are also holding a Wild Day Out on 11 October. Contact Sarah Cossom on 01392 279244 for more information



A child gets a bird's eye view of the locals

Sarah Cossom

NATURE NOTES

WILL THIS be a good year for field mushrooms? The omens are not propitious, since the basic requirement for a heavy crop is always held to be a hot summer.

Prolonged heat allows the mycelium, or fibrous root system, to grow large and strong, so that when rain comes and the temperature falls, the plant has the energy to throw up fruit above ground level.

After the prolonged heat of 1976, whole fields literally turned white when rain last fell in September. But without sufficient warmth all activity remains subterranean.

Even if we now get a heatwave, it may be too late. But dedicated fungus hunters never give up, and much remains mysterious about their quarry.

Why do mushrooms always seem to grow in some fields, or parts of fields, and not in others? Why are some immediately infested with worms, which eat their way up the stalks, while others remain deliciously intact? Height above sea-level, inclination (to north, south, east or west), sun and shade seem to make little difference.

One traditional belief is that mushrooms thrive on stallions' droppings – and this is probably because stallions, like donkeys, habitually dung on one spot, thus creating concentrated deposits of manure.

DUFF HART-DAVIS



The thrill of the Chase

From the top of Dorset's Cranborne Chase you can look down to where the kings of England stalked deer for hundreds of years. This land of rival estates descends through a series of interlocking hills and valleys, the chalk downs cleared for farming, their clay-topped brows covered with dense woodland.

Among the trees, roebuck and fallow deer still breed and shelter from the gun. Some days you can see perhaps a dozen fallow deer lying in a huddle in the fields, enjoying the warmth. A dangerous habit, particularly this month, when foreign hunters seek trophy heads during the rut.

It is an extraordinarily empty land, which at times seems untouched by modernity. You need a horse to see over the high hedges, and traverse deserted valleys that the few minor roads pass by.

The handful of villages, often owned by a single family, are nestled inconspicuously into hollows. Building sticks to tradition - the flint fronts of the cottages are divided in regular fashion by a couple of lines of bricks or, in the grander churches, by stone. Thatch is making a comeback, complementing the white-washed Dorset "cobb" of some homes.

I'm standing in the midst of the vast woodland, whose depth makes this area so important to naturalists. It is perhaps the closest the countryside comes to an abandoned industrial landscape.

The hazel trees are overgrown - for centuries their straight, flexible branches were conscientiously cropped and bent to build the stiff-high sheep folds that once spread across the Chase. And the naturally

occurring ash and birch were cut to make England's finest brushes. Now it's like a graveyard - peaceful, eerie, but unproductive.

This is an area that has seen many battles. The Civil War devastated Dorset, so evenly was it divided between Royalists and Roundheads. But mostly people have fought over land use. On the edge of the hazel wood is Bloody Shard Gate, scene of a fierce 18th-century skirmish between poachers and gamekeepers. Then there was the 100-year battle by farmers of the Chase for the right to destroy deer that strayed on to their land. In 1829, after 800 years of roaming unmolested, except by the royal hunt, the deer lost their legal protection. In just two days, villagers shot 12,000 of them.

However, the latest battle does not involve poachers or farmers. It is about estate agents seeking to turn this rural idyll into a land with homes fit for the rich - because the Chase is only a 20-minute drive from Salisbury, itself just 90 minutes by train from London. Commuters and week-enders snap up properties.

Later this month, they will learn whether Savills, the upmarket estate agent, has pulled off a coup by persuading the local council to permit the building of impressive mansions in some of the highest, most conspicuous points of the Chase. The largest is expected to go for £750,000; it is complete with garages, gravel drive, a dovecot and a 42ft-high tiled roof that will tower above the landscape. The plans for 21 luxury homes have caused outrage.

Savills acts as trustee of the Rusmore estate, the family home of Michael Pitt-Rivers, great-grandson of General Pitt-Rivers, who is recognised as a forefather of

In a beautiful Dorset valley, a centuries-old feud continues, but now it concerns a thoroughly modern issue: the green belt. By Jack O'Sullivan



Interlocking hills at Cranborne Chase (top); Chettle House, a baroque battle site (above) Main photograph: John Lawrence

Rivers' antecedents. That went on for 500 years. Then his family came into money, thanks to smuggling, for which the woods of the Chase provided wonderful cover.

They bought their own patch of 1,300 acres bordering the Pitt-Rivers' estate and including the entire village of Chettle. The estate also boasts the elegant Chettle House,

designed by Thomas Archer and described by Nikolaus Pevsner as one of the finest examples of baroque architecture in England. A rival,

indeed, for the Tudor manor occupied just a few miles away by the much wealthier Pitt-Rivers family.

Fast forward a century or so, to the Thirties. Rushmore is now occupied by George Pitt-Rivers, a famous Fascist in the Thirties, who was interned on the Isle of Man during the Second World War. Mr Bourke

tells the tale of a row between George and his great-uncle Edward, in the gunroom at Chettle House.

The story goes that Pitt-Rivers chased Edward through the library, the oak hall, the stone hall, the dining-room and back into the library as he tried to get a good shot. "Fortunately," recalls Mr Bourke, "Pitt-Rivers was tripped up by the butler. The two men never spoke to each other again." And George Pitt-Rivers was never again invited to open the Chettle village fete.

Relations between the latest generation are warmer, but the rivalry has continued. Michael Pitt-Rivers has been as unconventional as his father George. He opposed Fascism and fought in the Second World War. However, he was, like his father, also jailed, but for a different reason: for indecency involving an under-age boy, in the Fifties.

In almost every detail, Michael

rejected his father, who had taken his heterosexuality very seriously, marrying four times. Michael was married to, and then divorced, George Orwell's widow, an alliance that must have irritated his father's fascist principles. But he has since spent most of his adult life with his companion, William Davis.

When Michael was released from prison, the Bourkes invited him to open the Chettle village fete. "My mother," recalls Mr Bourke, "used to say, 'who would we rather have to open the fete - a wife-beater like George or a homosexual?' She much preferred a homosexual."

Nevertheless, the Bourkes have looked on somewhat disapprovingly as Pitt-Rivers squandered his inheritance. Meanwhile, they have toiled away at their 1,300 acres, which, despite the fine house, is a vegetable patch compared with the Pitt-Rivers' estate. They are in no mood to give him the easy way out and let his trustees cash in on a money-making loophole in the law.

"It would," says Mr Bourke, "create a completely unacceptable precedent if estate owners were able to secure planning permission for dwellings in the open countryside in order to provide money to maintain and enhance their estates."

This, then, is a story of a battle to save the countryside from the rush to build in green fields. A typical modern tale.

It is also about the decline of a great estate, which once spanned 35,000 acres, and whose owner was lord of the Chase. But, as in all country tales, it is crucially about long memories and hidden rivalries. We should find out soon who triumphs in this latest round between two ancient Dorset families.

A bounty-hunter's paradise

WEAKEND walk: dramatic cliffs are testament to shipwrecks of old. By Sophie Poklewski-Koziell

Tor and is said to be the site of a medieval lighthouse chapel. Apart from the spectacular rock scenery, there is plenty to admire just inches from the path. Scabios (cornflower-blue) intermingle with clumps of Sea Pink (Thrift). Honeyuckle grows wherever an opportunity arises and in wetter places, the saffron spikes of Monbretia are unmissable. This is also a favourite habitat for the Stonechat; its bouncing flight is a clue to its identity, as is its peculiar "tsak tsak" song.

The walk starts at Hartland Quay, where the old Barbou Master's house and outbuildings have been converted into a relaxed, old-fashioned hotel. The original quay is now washed away, but for three centuries allowed smacks laden with Welsh limestone and other goods to reach this previously inaccessible area.

Join the coast path and follow the well-signed route for 1.5 miles in a southerly direction. At first the path skirts behind a series of three grassy cliffs. The last, and highest, of these cliffs is named St. Catherine's

minding the visitor that, for years, there was a business in collecting sand to enrich the farmland.

From here follow the path inland, taking a right over the stream - a promising spot for a glimpse of the elusive Dipper. Here the path splits; so the over-energetic can be sent racing up the steep path along the lip of the cliff, while others might prefer the gentler way that threads its way through a mass of gorse and bracken, around the base of the hill.

The path climbs gently after St. Catherine's Tor through grassland covered in a haze of white and purple clover; then down a rocky path bordered by dense patches of purple heather and thyme.

Having reached Speake's Mill Mouth it is good moment to catch your breath and linger at the waterfalls. The four falls are impressive, the first being a 56-foot drop down the flat face of the cliff. An old donkey path leads up from the beach, re-

gards is strongly recommended. There is an exceptional bog garden, 90 varieties of rose and Devonshire cream tea to be indulged in.

After the mill, take a left at the first crossroads and at the second (Kernstone Cross) carry straight across down the lane marked "Unsuitable for motors". Turn left at Wargery farm and follow the track into Stoke. The church tower of Stoke St. Nectan is the highest in Devon, a good landmark for lost seamen - and walkers. The church was founded in 1050 as a thanksgiving offering for a husband saved from shipwreck. Many of the less fortunate victims of the sea are buried in the churchyard. Inside the church, don't miss the late Norman font, the 14th century decorated wagon roof and the impressive rood screen.

At the back entrance of the church, take the fern-clad lane to the valley bottom. Following signs for the coast path, take a left through a field and carry

straight on along the Abbey river, to the sea again. On the way there is a marvellous line of Hornbeam and Oak; styled by the strong gales, their branches snake up and out in impossible twists and curves.

Taking the coastal path go left, back towards Hartland Quay. On a fine day, Lundy Island can be seen. Watch out for the unstable cliff edges on Warren Cliff, as the edge is sudden and the drops long. The rock strata on the beach below are quite incredible. They are a geologists' dream and jaw-dropping for the rest of us. For those curious to find out more about the rock formations, or the shipwrecks, a quick visit to the two-roomed Hartland Quay museum (50p) is a good idea. Full of all sorts of bountiful washed up from the numerous wrecks, as well as dramatic photographs of sea rescues, it is well worth the visit.

The walk is about 6.5 miles long. To get there, take the turnoff for Hartland on the A39 between Bideford and Bude and continue on to Hartland Quay. As a map you will need the OS Explorer 126: Clovelly and Hartland.

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Create a home gallery by propping up pictures on a ledge or mantelpiece and changing them when you feel like a new view

Habitat archive picture

Are you game enough to put yourself in the picture?

Call me a philistine but the first thing I noticed about the current Turner exhibition at the Tate Gallery in London wasn't the paintings, but rather the frames they were mounted in. The closer I peered, the more each frame seemed just a little different from the others - individual pieces in their own right. Yet the frames themselves are usually overshadowed by the pictures they hold.

There is, however, one type of person who always notices the frame first. According to Christies, the auctioneers, some art historians, keen to take their knowledge one step further, will study the frames as well as the pictures, and then become collectors, searching for rare 16th century Renaissance frames or attempting to "reunite" frames with works from the same period. Although frame collecting is a specialist field, to the small band of collectors the frames are an art in themselves, and the general public is starting to catch on to the idea.

Frames have been around for centuries - think of grand houses with windows designed specifically to "frame" a particular view - but picture framing as a concept really evolved in the 13th and 14th centuries when artists would craft a frame to accompany their picture. In fact, frames can often be a guide to particular periods in time.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, for example, gilding - probably because of artists' links with the Church in general - was a common decorative style, and frames became increasingly ornate with extravagant garlands or leaf motifs incorporated into the design.

Distinct geographical styles also evolved. In Holland, 17th century "Lutma" frames, with their swirling leaf motifs, were very popular and gilded black cassetta frames are typically thought of as Spanish.

In contrast, in North America, frames carved from indigenous woods with simple, flat edges began to appear and, in 19th century Britain, the mass production of

frames, designed for middle class homes and newly opened museums, set a precedent for standard frames and spawned a whole new generation of innovative frame designers reacting against this.

This tradition has continued into the 20th century, when variety is definitely the name of the game. Although gilded frames remain a design classic, minimalist frames, frameless pictures or even pictureless frames are all easily found. People are asking more of their walls, and a recent trend in interiors seems to be the efforts that go into using whole walls as display areas.

Antique cutlery, leaves or a treasured item of memorabilia are commonly displayed in picture frames. As Daisy Bridgewater of *World of Interiors* magazine explains: "People are experimenting and hanging all kinds of things, even pot lids, on their walls - a picture doesn't necessarily need to be a picture in the conventional sense".

In the Paris flat featured in the magazine's October issue, the owner decided that her picture frames were so beautiful there was no need to put pictures in them and left them to hang solo.

The frames you choose to decorate your walls and, in particular, the way you hang them, says a lot. A wall

dripping in pictures from top to toe, or a jumble of pictures propped up above a ledge, can be somehow more satisfying than a picture haphazardly hooked up according to the line of the best fit.

This home-as-gallery nature of picture display is a relatively new phenomenon in the average home. In a society where fashions change so frequently and where constant visual stimulation is both demanded and given "being able to change images is important," advises Toni Rodgers, editor of *Elle Decoration*.

"People don't want all their pictures on display at once. By propping pictures up on a ledge

temporarily you can simply bring different pictures out when you want a new view."

Whatever your individual taste, it has to be said that frames are a way of making a decorative impact, and there is no reason not to have fun with your walls with the current range of affordable frames. IKEA's (0181 233 2300 for nearest store) Reslig deep frame (£4.50) is 50x70cm and takes anything up to 10mm thick, so grab a favourite slimline possession and give it an impact Damien Hirst-style.

Habitat's autumn range of frames also does a floor easel for £17.50. Habitat (0645 334433) is a similarly good place to head to for frames; there is a gallery department in all Habitat stores, selling various prints and frames. Joining the Habitat Art Club (which began on 30 April this year) costs £15 (£10 for storecard holders) and this entitles you to 15 per cent off all gallery products as well as receiving a quarterly magazine and details of various special offers and preview evenings.

Habitat's autumn range of frames continues the fashionable oriental theme of simple, pure living. Available from mid-September onwards, Bambu frames have bamboo edges

and start at £6 for 10cm by 15cm. The Aluminus range is still extremely popular, and the smallest costs £7.50 for a 10cm by 15cm frame. Alternatively, create a family of frames to nest on top of your trendy, minimalist mantelpiece with tiny Eye frames, for £3.50 each.

And, for the truly dedicated minimalist, there is always the "frame-free" option. According to Rodgers: "People are often using no frames at all, but instead mounting a series of photographs on art board and squaring them up immaculately to create a display."

Others are blowing photos up to fill a whole wall and the appeal of this is that you can have a go yourself by nipping down to your local quick-print shop. In some ways, you can't go wrong - even if the blown-up picture becomes grainy, this may give it a certain wistful quality you hadn't expected.

Where to pick up a good frame: Frame Express (01453 885087 for nearest store) has branches throughout the south of England. Prices range from £5/m to £50/m and shops are open from around 9am-6pm Mon-Sat;

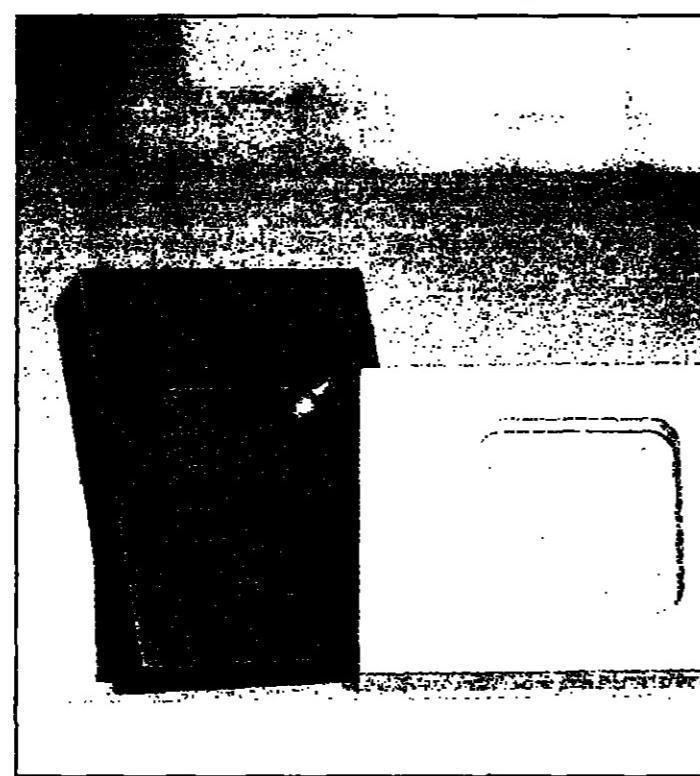
IKEA (0181 205 5607 for nearest store) has frames starting at £1 for three 10x15cm wood frames, and going up to £22 for a 50x70cm solid pine frame;

Each Habitat (0645 334433 for nearest store) store has a 'gallery' department stocking frames and prints;

Christies (0171 581 7611 for inquiries) will be holding its next frame auction on 28 October. A 16th century Venetian frame was sold at the last auction for £8,000.

The Home (01274 530770), at Salts Mill, Saltaire, Bradford, is open from 10am-6pm daily and stocks a range of frames costing between £5 and £10, from simple metal frames to cloth and wooden frames;

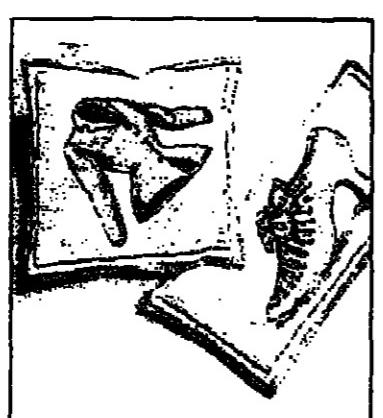
Centre Gallery (0141 332 8880) is at 456a Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. Expect to pay £45-£55 for a 60x80cm single mount frame, or commission a frame in the next two weeks and get two-for-the-price-of-one.



Clockwise from above: Eye frames, in chocolate, mustard, slate and various other colours, £3.50 each, will be available from Habitat this autumn; Reslig deep frame, £4.50 IKEA; Bambu frames from £6 each at Habitat this autumn; Bás box frame, £6 from IKEA

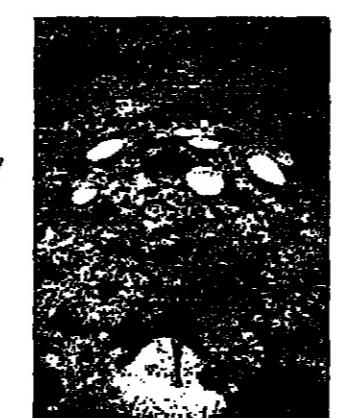


GOOD THING



NO STYLISH drawers should be without a hand-painted lavender sachet by Julie Perren, a theatrical artist and designer who has now started using her skills on fabrics in the home. Already well known in America, her lavender bags are available by mail order from Perren design (0181-873 0339) and start at £9.95.

MAD THING



NEVER MIND smelling sweetly; this summer you should make sure your garden is singing sweetly with these garden bells from The Traditional Garden Supply Company. Made from brass and based on a sculptor's design, the bells will tinkle in the breeze as they ring against each other. They cost from £64.95 and are available through mail order on 0870 600 3366.

SHOP TALK

ENSURE YOUR party goes with a swing by ordering a vodka luge from The Ice Box. Sit back, open-mouthed, while a vodka shot is launched from the top of your personally sculpted ice chute, carved in any shape from a mountainside to a human torso. If this is too much to contemplate, the company will carve your name in ice, design a corporate logo or simply "freeze" a thought. And in the unlikely event that you run short of ice this summer it provides a rapid-response delivery service of ice cubes within the central London area. Vodka luges cost from £50 and corporate logos from £200. The Ice Box, Unit 7, Battersea Business Centre, 99-109 Lavender Hill, London, SW11 5QL (0171-498 0800).

TIM STEIN



JULIA'S 550

Save Our British Sweetshops

Purveyor of humbugs and bullseyes to the great British sweet tooth, the high-street confectioner is back in business. By Karen Falconer

There is something irresistible about big glass jars full of brightly coloured sweets, especially when they glint from a tiny window in a brightly painted sweet shop. Childhood memories are reawakened: the witch's house in *Hansel and Gretel*; the magical sweet shops in Roald Dahl's literature; buying penny sweets at the corner shop.

The British sweet tooth is legendary - making us the biggest consumers of confectionery in the world. And, few and far between as they may be, small sweet shops with their enduring memories of half-penny happiness are back in vogue, literally: "The old-fashioned sweet shop in Whitstable is a cult destination," said last month's *Vogue*. "At the seaside, it's hip to eat ice-cream cones, aniseed twists and flying saucers from the local store."

Indeed, Mrs Thompson, owner of that very Whitstable shop, Parkers, is beginning to feel quite a media star. Her single-fronted shop window, lined with jar upon jar of sweets, has suddenly found itself in fashion shoots and film sets.

"I ought to put copies up on the wall," she says, before scooping out another quarter-ounce of rhubarb and custards. The space is tiny. More of a walk-in wardrobe of candy floss, glace fruit drops, pineapple rock, midget gems, humbugs, pink shrimps, gobstoppers, aniseed balls, blackcurrant and liquorice ... 130 jars in all crown the yellow tongue and groove walls next to curtains patterned with Liquorice Allsorts and trays of one-penny chews.

A stream of customers, young, old



Above: Parkers sweet shop in Whitstable is a paradise for confectionery lovers. Below: Barker & Dobson Mint Humbugs, £1.20 per jar from independent cornershops

Edward Webb

and middle-aged, flows in and out. "This is quiet," Mrs Thompson says about the pleasantries with her customers. "You should see it when the children are back at school. They queue up sideways to come in. And the London types, they are amazed. The window reminds them of old times. They buy six or seven kinds of sweets. That's why we keep the jars in the window."

Small, well-presented and friendly, with round spectacles, Mrs Thompson fits her role perfectly - as far as can be imagined from the grumpy, Llandaff shopkeeper in Roald Dahl's autobiography.

"When we came here, a lot of people came in and said to me 'you're not going to change it, are you? Turn it into an estate agent or a fish and chip shop, or replace all the jars?'" says "Of course, I'm not," she would reply.

Parkers, like many of the old-style sweet shops, has been around for more than 70 years as a family business. When Mrs Thompson took it over four years ago, she'd never run a sweet shop and seems as starry-eyed about it as many of her customers. "People come in here for lots of different reasons," she explains. "Some because they've never seen a thing like it before. Others to show their kids what sweets were like when they were young."

"Then there are the old regulars who buy the same things every week, and lots of American tourists

who like it because it's so unusual."

While newsagents, supermarkets and petrol stations thrive in the grand metropolis, the traditional sweet shops fare better in quainter spots. Margaret Webb runs Ye Olde Tuck Shoppe, in Rye's old town, with her husband David, after buying it from his parents, who'd owned it for 18 years. Their business depends on being different to the normal chocolate dominated confectioners.

Part bakery, they make bread hedgehogs and other cake delicacies, but buy in all the sugar mice, pear drops, liquorice torpedoes, dolly mixtures, rainbow drops, chocolate chewing nuts and other sweets, many of them hand-made. My metal-filled teeth rattle at the thought. "We sell sweets in whatever quantities people want," says Mrs Webb. "We even sell one ounce portions and penny sweets, but we are obviously keen to get the average spend up."

Plans include making their own chocolates - and selling mail order from their new website.

Like many sweet shop owners, Mrs Webb is having to find new suppliers as the giant manufacturers, that are regularly gobbling up the smaller ones, think that it is not worth supplying her. "Benewicks told me before Easter that I could no longer have my old favourite, rose and violet creams," she laments.

"Big manufacturers just want to sell to Woolworths."

the older staples gradually come back into fashion.

"Pick & mix has shown a 26 per cent rise in sales in the last few years," comments Mintel research. "Most sweets are bought on impulse, and consumers seem to prefer to sample toffee and fudge with a variety of other sweets."

But will forthcoming EC legislation demanding that all confectionery be wrapped, be crunch-time for the old - and potentially unhygienic - way of selling? Keith Bidder doesn't think so. "We can supply wrapped or unwrapped sweets. The only problems may be on sweets which come in different shapes and sizes, like Liquorice Allsorts, which we don't make anyway."

Indeed, although the British may each consume an average of 16kg of confectionery each year, the number of small-scale shops has declined dramatically since the end of the sweet rationing war years; as has the number of manufacturers - down, according to Trebor Bassett, from 580 in 1950 to nearer 80 now.

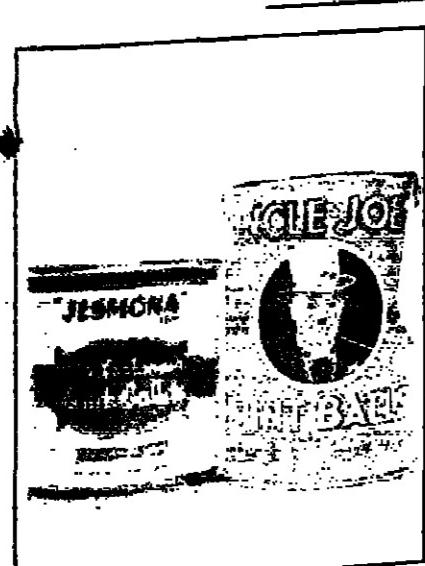
Keith Bidder, director of Bonds, one of the few manufacturers still to service small customers by selling direct to them, is pleased that larger retailers like Woolworths, synonymous with pick & mix, have recently introduced some "traditional" sweet sections.

Others, like the Co-op, are bringing back more pick & mix lines as



Sweets for my sweet, sugar for my honey...

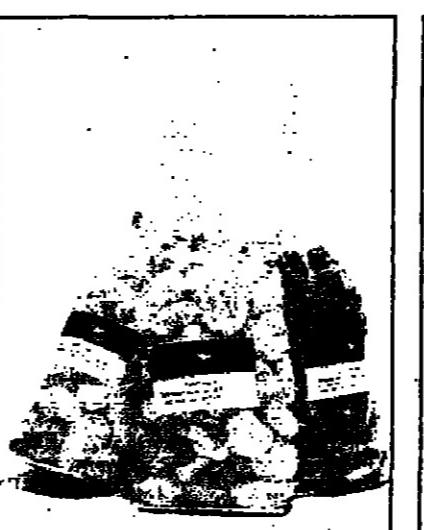
Six sweets you should be seen sucking this summer. By Rhiannon Batten. Photographs by Neville Elder.



Jesmona Old Fashioned Black Bullets, £1.95, Harvey Nichols (0171 235 5000 for mail order) and Uncle Joe's Mini Balls, £2.90, Bluebird (0171 559 1153 for mail order)



Old fashioned Black Striped Balls, Golden Humbugs and Bulls Eyes, all by The Candy Company, £2.50 each from Selfridges (0171 629 1234)



Chocolate Limes, Barley Sugars, and Pear Drops, £1.95 each, Bluebird (0171 559 1153 for mail order)



English Provender Company Aniseed Balls, £2.06, Bluebird (0171 559 1153 for mail order)



Bonbon Barnier, £5.75, Fortnum and Mason (0171 465 8666 for mail order)



Jameson's Raspberry Ruffles, £13.50 for a 2kg jar, Trebor Bassett supplies to independent cornershops nationwide and most will sell whole jars

It's the right way to handle the left

Lefties unite to affirm their retail rights. By Charlotte Packer



Anything Left-Handed, above, the Soho shop and mail-order business, serves to placate frustrated left-handers

Next week, on 13 August, southpaws, skiffle-hands, gibble-fists, the hay-neived and the scroochy will gather together up and down the country to celebrate their left-handedness at the seventh annual Left-Handers' Day. The event is organised by the Left-Handers' Club which was founded in 1990 by Lauren and Keith Milson (both left-handed, of course), the husband and wife team who, together with Reg Milson (Keith's father), own Anything Left-Handed, the shop and mail-order company which caters to the southpaw's every need.

When it opened in the heart of Soho in 1988, Anything Left-Handed stocked just 40 items designed for use by left-handers, and not all of them were that useful. Victorian-style mugs designed to keep mustachioed males from getting tea in their whiskers, for example.

Thirty years on, the moustache mugs have been discontinued and more than 160 new products have been introduced to the shop and mail-order catalogue. Knives and scissors are a particular strength, which is not surprising given that before buying the company, left-handed Reg Milson was a cutter and

used to supply the original owners with all their blades.

Since taking over the company 15 years ago, the Milsons have been working hard not only to provide excellent left-handed goods (computer keyboards, £9; reverse-opening chequebook holders, £2.99; files, £4.99; and notepads, £6.99) but also to raise public awareness of the daily frustrations faced by left-handers.

"I never really thought I had any problems with being left-handed," explains Lauren. "But I do remember handing in my first piece of work at school and the teacher throwing it away because it was completely back to front. But as for using scissors or a can-opener, I knew it was just clumsy."

That was until she tried her first pair of left-handed scissors. "The blades are arranged differently and at first I couldn't trust them: I was so used to the sensation of grinding the blades together. But now I would never expect anyone to use scissors which didn't match the hand they would naturally use." She also remembers her mother walking out of the room whenever she tried to cut her hair. "I think it's more painful for the person watching. I just thought I was hopeless at slicing bread."

On Thursday Lauren hopes that left-handers will come along to the stands around the country and try out the left-handed knives, tape measures, rulers, peelers, can-openers and even their slightly gummicky anticlockwise watches, and see how much easier their lives could be.

As well as being an opportunity to road test left-handed products, the event will give right-handers the chance to see what they have escaped: staff at British Telecom in Oxford will find their canteen has become a "Lefty Zone" for the day

and various right-handed sports teams will find themselves up against the might of the left-handers in left-hand vs right-hand cricket, bowls, football and badminton. Although this may sound rather light-hearted, the Milsons insist that there is a serious message behind the otherwise frivolous activities. Lauren is constantly amazed by how little advice teachers are given on teaching left-handed children. "When you consider that there are 6 million left-handed people in Britain, and that primary school teachers will probably find

that they have two or three left-handers in their classrooms, it is sad that they're not shown how to help these children develop their handwriting properly."

She goes on to point out that when children learn to use rulers or scissors they are invariably designed for right-handed use, which could account for the idea that some left-handed children are slower than their classmates.

Lauren has her own experience of the problems facing right-handed teachers dealing with left-handed children: although her son is

left-handed like her and her husband, their daughter is not. Consequently the Milsons have to think twice about everything they do to help their four-year-old from lacing shoes to laying the table.

They have drawn up a fact sheet specifically on teaching left-handers to write. The shop also has books on how to teach young left-handers in general.

And for anxious parents who fear that their left-handed progeny will interpret any special treatment as a backhanded way of suggesting that they are inferior to their right-hand-



There are 6 million left-handed people in Britain, but teachers get little advice on helping left-handed children

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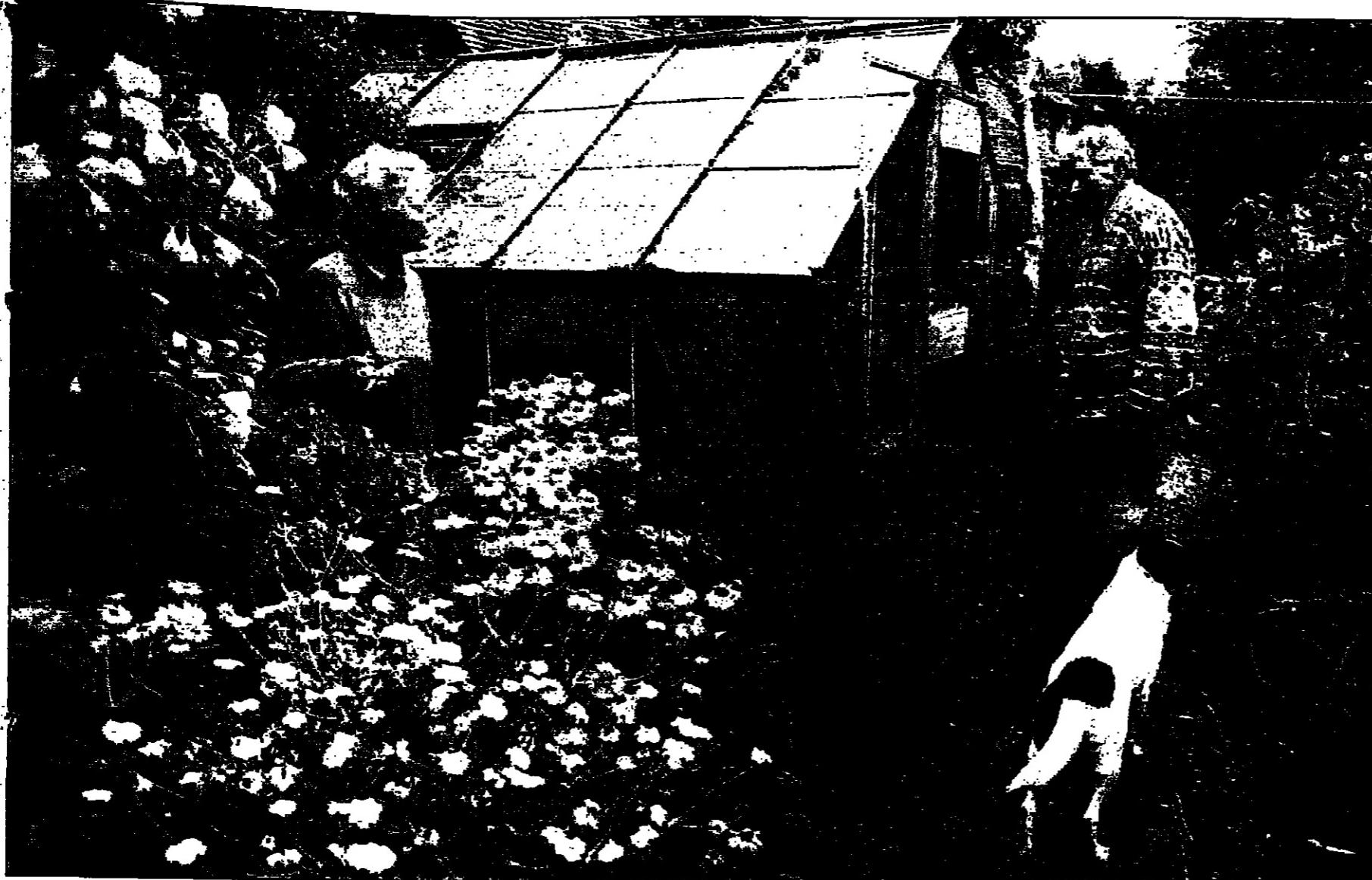
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Victor and Christine Scott in their garden (above) at Aston Abbotts near Aylesbury and the Clematis Cirrhosa from south-west Turkey which grows happily in their British garden

John Lawrence



Need an answer? Just ask Victor

Professional private gardeners, with their exhaustive knowledge of the natural world, are a dying breed. By Ursula Buchan

As August wears on, an air of tension hangs over British households. The imminent announcement of public examination results plays havoc with the even tenor of family ways. Success in examinations has become synonymous with a good education.

It was not always so. In private service gardening, for example, examinations once meant very little but experience almost everything. Intelligent men "worked themselves up" from garden boy to journeyman improver; then foreman, and, if they were very good and very lucky, to head gardener. Their knowledge was prodigious. Though there are still men about who spent their working lives in private service, their ranks are thinning fast.

Victor Scott is one of those at the end of a proud tradition. He is 70 and has lived all his life in the pretty village of Aston Abbotts, near Aylesbury. He is a charming man, courteous, friendly and seemingly at ease. He is happy to talk, in engaging and fluent manner, and in a soothing Buckinghamshire burr, of what he knows. And he knows a very great deal. He is a countryman and a gifted and hard-working gardener: but he is also a botanist and naturalist and largely self taught.

His earliest memory is of being lifted up on to his father's shoulders to look into a bird's nest. By the age of nine, he knew the Latin names of

all the local flowers and birds. By the time he left school at 14, in the middle of the Second World War, he was already in demand to show people the wild flowers of Buckinghamshire. In his youth, he cycled as far away as the Lake District and Cornwall looking for, and photographing, British native flowers.

After a year on a local farm, he entered a "private service", going to work as a garden boy for the owners of one of the big houses in the village. In time he became head gardener; in charge of extensive herbaceous borders, ornamental shrubs and trees, and the kitchen garden. Whilst there, he attended night school to

study botany, zoology and geography, and he also took the Royal Horticultural Society's General Certificate, for which he received the highest marks in his year. So he passed some examinations in the end.

Because of his interest in natural history, Victor's reputation grew beyond the boundaries of the village. During the brilliant, and successful, campaign to prevent the building of London's third airport at nearby Criblington, he gave evidence to the public inquiry on the likely impact of an airport on local birds and, in particular, the largest starling roost (some two million strong) in the country. "No Airport Here" can still

be discerned, painted on the side wall of the Victorian house where his family has lived since 1854.

About 20 years ago, the garden where he worked changed hands; somewhat out of sympathy with the new owners' idea of what a garden should be, he took his leave. As he was already a part-time lecturer on botany and natural history for the Workers' Educational Association and had conducted study groups abroad, he decided to take his chance as a freelance naturalist. He was assisted by his wife, Christine, a retired teacher whom he met on one of his first study tours, to Cyprus. On trips abroad she acted as courier and bird

expert while Victor concentrated on flowers. Among other destinations, they went to Eastern Europe, Soviet Central Asia, Uzbekistan, India, Canada, Australia and Costa Rica. They always took care to do their research beforehand, so that they might have an answer to any question fired at them.

Victor is certainly full of information. I never knew, for example, that there are many common plants of the Canadian Rockies, such as the one-flowered wintergreen and the calypso orchid, which grow as great rarities in north-east Scotland and Scandinavia.

Unfortunately, a mild stroke has

recently forced Victor to retire from leading tours abroad. But there is always the garden. As well as an allotment, he cares for about an acre surrounding the house.

At first sight it appears to be a

charming and natural country gar-

den, but closer examination reveals many plants that you will not come

by every day.

There are no fewer than 40 plants

collected by Victor abroad (with the appropriate plant permits, of course). Here there is *Arum creticum*, which he brought back from Crete; there is *Paeonia mlokosewitschii* ('Molly the Witch') from the Caucasus; elsewhere is

from seed, including some fine silver birches and Western red cedars.

There are peaches, 'Lord Napier' nectarines and 'Moor Park' apricots, growing in a home-made cold greenhouse; plums and cherries on a warm wall; a pond and bog garden; a rockery; and, of course, neat rows of vegetables. The Scots can boast that they are self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables. Further from the house, Victor has made a wild flower meadow, and has planted a hedge of native trees and an orchard.

Although his wings have now been clipped, Victor still conducts local naturalists' groups and gives talks in the area. He is on the panel of lecturers for the National Trust, the Royal Horticultural Society and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and has a collection of more than 20,000 slides. For a modest fee, any organisation in Buckinghamshire and the surrounding counties may engage him to give an illustrated talk. I should say it was money well spent, for listening to Victor is an education in itself.

Victor Scott may be contacted on 01296 681488

CUTTINGS

THERE ARE some simple inventions that change your life. For me, one such is the Test Match Special hat. This brilliant invention consists of an ordinary baseball cap, into one side of which has been inserted a small aerial and a small retractable aerial. The sound is relayed to the ears by means of ear-pieces connected to batteries in the hat. For those people, like me, who have room in their hearts for both gardening and cricket, this cap is a godsend. I can now weed in

the garden and listen to the Test Match at the same time. This summer, I have had the pleasure of listening to Aggers and Blowers describe some pretty tense moments: Fraser and Croft manfully saving the Third Test while I mowed the wild flower "meadow", and Atherton and Stewart finishing off the Fourth in fine style while I was cleaning round the raspberries.

Today I shall, no doubt, find plenty of reason to be out in the garden as the third day of the

Fifth Test at Headingley unfolds. That is, if I can wrest the cap from my husband. I recommend this hat even for cricket-haters: for the radio receives both Long Wave and FM stations, so the choice of stations is wide.

The cap is available at cricket grounds around the country for £15 and there is a floppy white sunhat at the same price. Or send £17 (to include post and packing) to the MCC Shop, Lord's Cricket Ground, St John's Wood, London NW8 8QN.

IF YOU sowed wallflower seed in May or June in a nursery row, pinch out the tips now to make bushier, free-flowering plants.

Plants in pots and hanging baskets will benefit from deadheading to keep them flowering for a while longer. Feed them weekly with a general liquid fertiliser if you haven't already used a "controlled-release" one that lasts the season. Cut off the spent flowers of lupins, hardy geraniums and delphiniums.

WEEKEND WORK

Now is a good time to take what are called "semi-ripe" cuttings of a number of evergreen shrubs, such as lavender, rosemary, hebe, escallonia, senecio and olearia.

Prune back this year's long growths of wisteria to five leaves from the main stems and, if you have not yet done so, now is the time to prune apples and pears on cordons, fans and espaliers. Cut back the young shoots to three leaves from the main stems.

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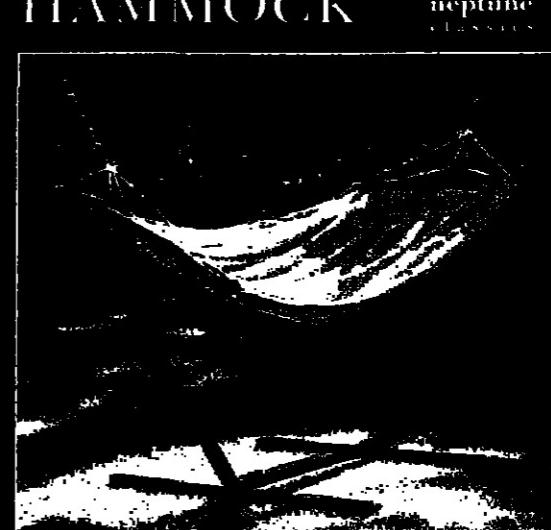
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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD THAT FAILED TO MAKE THE HEADLINES, SELECTED BY WILLIAM HARTSTON

HOME NEWS

London: A man who had changed his name to Free R Cannabis was convicted of possession of drugs at Southwark Crown Court despite his arguing that legislation banning cannabis amounted to a "deliberate oppression of civil rights". Mr Cannabis had been arrested outside the Home Office as he waited to present a plant to Jack Straw. He defended himself in court, dressed in hemp clothes and shoes made from cannabis plants.

Edinburgh: John Kamakaze set a new world record by spending 15 minutes suspended in mid-air by eight meat hooks embedded in his back and one in each leg. Mr Kamakaze, who claims that pain is all in the mind, told Reuters: "It didn't hurt a bit... The only thing that hurts is a blister on my foot from walking about too much yesterday."

London: The number of people arrested for offensive and racist chanting at football matches increased last season from 10 to 33 according to official figures.

FOREIGN NEWS

Zimbabwe: A man has been jailed for a month after he pleaded guilty to bottling his urine and selling it as perfume. According to local media, a woman who bought two bottles realised her mistake when she tried it out at home.

Tokyo: The world's oldest living twins, Kin-san and Gin-san celebrated their 100th birthdays last week. They were born on 1 August 1892. Gin says she is in much better shape than when she was 100.

Stockholm: The Swedish newspaper Metro has reported the case of a suspected drug smuggler who was caught by a moose. The man's car collided with the animal near the Norwegian border. He was taken to hospital with minor injuries and his car towed to a nearby garage where mechanics discovered 28kg of hashish in it.



For the third year running residents of Christchurch, New Zealand, set a new world record for the number of people in a tramcar

Reuters

Seoul: A businessman and a dog-meat dealer have been arrested on charges of supplying restaurants with 4,800 dogs that had died of disease or been used for medical experiments. The contaminated dog meat was sold at a fifth of the normal market price to meet a big demand. Most of the dogs had died of intestinal diseases, but 860 of them had been used to test rabies vaccines.

Washington: Researchers have found that the learning capabilities of rats may be improved by playing them Mozart sonatas before they are born. Rats who had been played Mozart learnt paths through mazes more quickly than those played white noise or music by Philip Glass.

New Jersey: the title of Miss Crustacean 1998 has been won by a hermit crab called Crabopatra. More than 100 people sang "Here it comes, Miss Crustacean" as the winning crab crawled down a runway decorated with flowers to receive the Cucumber Ring Cup. Crabopatra won the beauty contest ahead of 38 other crabs including one called Leonardo DiCrabrio. "This may seem like a Mickey Mouse event, and it is a Mickey Mouse event, but it attracts a lot of attention," organiser Mark Soifer said.

Montreal: According to a paper delivered to the World Congress of Sociology, children who are never or hardly ever spanked do better on intelligence tests than children who are often spanked.

Tokyo: The Pure Love Alliance, a group based in the US, held its first rally in Japan to spread its message of sexual abstinence and to preach against the American culture of sex. "American culture is infiltrating the world, promoting the spread of things like prostitution and pornography," said 24-year-old Tricy Sincavage.

"Our aim is to help clean things up." According to an AP report, however, the message is not getting through to everyone. "I don't know what they're talking about," said fried noodle seller Etsu Sasaki, 40. "Japan said no to sex before marriage at the turn of the century, but not any more."

Mexico City: Prostitutes have reached an accord with officials that allows them to continue working on one of the city's main streets, as long as they stay at least 20 metres away from churches, schools and hospitals, do not expose their intimate body parts or underwear and do not solicit minors. They must also be free of sexually transmitted diseases.

Australia: Police in the town of Kalgoorlie, a rough gold-mining town in Western Australia are reported to be trying to bring an old local tradition to an end. According to Reuters they are cracking down on near-naked young women, known as "skimpies", who work as bartenders and give patrons a glimpse of their breasts or buttocks for a small fee.

CONFESIONS OF A PUZZLE MASTER

CHRIS MASLANKA HAS BEEN LISTENING TO HIS LISTENERS

FOR THE last 15 years my radio work has mostly involved manic puzzle phone-ins in which one of the chief indicators of success was how exhausted the phone operative was after the programme. If he wasn't worn out answering calls, I'd done my job badly. If I did it well, listeners raced to solve such puzzles as:

Q1 What do 1, 2, 6 and 10 have in common with each other and with no other numbers? Or:

Q2 Replace each asterisk in C*U*B*E by a letter to make a word.

Clearly callers were attracted by a direct challenge. As a producer once confided to me somewhat undiplomatically: "They obviously believe that, if an ordinary person like you can do such clever things,

then, perhaps, they can, too." Radio 4's *Puzzle Panel* was quite different. It was a daring, pioneering, ground-breaking programme - in other words, untried and untested. The format put a number of people around a table cracking each other's conundrums. Where was I the listener participation in that? I needn't have worried. Letters, emails and faxes flooded into room 7058.

For some the pleasure remained purely passive - "Hearing impossible puzzles being solved by such clever people," as one listener remarked, but for most, the first level of participation was in trying to keep abreast of the panel or even beat them to the answer.

Many listeners wrote in gleefully to say that they had beaten the panel to the answer and to describe in

minute detail exactly how they'd gone about it. This was not mere showing off, nor competitiveness, but genuine delight at scoring an intellectual success.

Nor did they take the panel's learned pronouncements lying down. Quibbles abounded. It became clear that listeners were following every word that was said in a critical way, recording it and replaying it again and again or staying up late for the repeat on Sunday night.

Then there was the listener's puzzle, set each week in the form of a puzzle story. When the World Service asked me to broadcast puzzles to the hostages in the Gulf Crisis, it was puzzle stories they asked for. From the dark tales of wolves and the dark forests of Eastern Poland told to me as a child by my babushka grew my interest in natural

magic, puzzles and the extraordinary possibilities of the everyday - the land of "What if?" just at our elbows. This is no bad place to visit, for creativity is powered by "What ifs?" and not "Because that's how things are!"

This story-telling has its uses, too. "Fear of Failure" - as psychologists call it - can outweigh "Need for Achievement", especially for those with an over-pessimistic view of their own mental abilities. A good story - and humour - can lower this threshold and remove the threat. And even if the account fails to charm the listener into attempting the puzzle, he still enjoys a good story. But what profusion and diverse creativity these puzzles evoked. Some callers sent pages of computer programming, closely reasoned logical accounts, algebraical

versions and reams of intelligently directed trial and error, all filled out with personal anecdotes and ideas for further puzzles.

Schoolchildren wrote in in their best handwriting carefully detailing the steps by which they reached their conclusions. I remember how hard it was as a teacher to train pupils into the habit of monitoring thought processes and stating on the paper what you are doing; and here were 12-year-olds doing it naturally. But the most original way in which *Puzzle Panel* encouraged active participation was in inviting the creation of panel beaters: puzzles devised by the listeners with the specific aim of stumping the experts. I expected the contributions sent by Don Manley, one of this country's most skilled verbal engineers, to be good, and they were:

Q3 Get down? I've got down! (4)

And he almost got one over the panel with this one:

Q4 One is one of one (10)

But what surprised me most was the quality of the "ordinary" listeners' puzzle creations. It was of a quality and simplicity to make all of us on *Puzzle Panel* look to our enigmatological laurels.

Q5 Nothing squared = a cube

That enigma, submitted by IM Berry of Coventry, had us all barking up the wrong tree.

And the following contribution from Arthur Hall of Goring-by-Sea, was of the highest order, producing a particularly pleasing answer:

Q6 Turn this year upside down and you get 6661, which is 6,663 years hence. Inverting next year gives 6661, which is 4,662 years away. Which year in history takes longest to be overtaken?

The undiplomatic producer I mentioned above was perhaps right, though for the wrong reason. When it comes to creativity, there are no ordinary people: we are all extraordinary.

SOLUTIONS

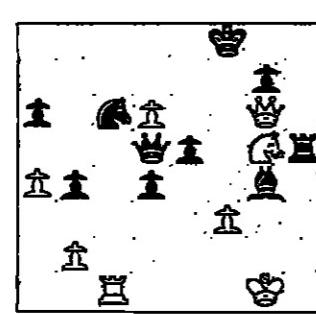
1. The only four whole numbers with three-letter names.
2. CRUMBLE
3. DUCK
4. RECIPROCAL
5. OXO
6. 1066

CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

AFTER eight rounds of the British championship, Matthew Sadler was beautifully placed to take the title. He was half a point ahead of the field and had met all his closest rivals. Two rounds later, however, all his hopes had evaporated. The first thing that went wrong for him was Jonathan Speelman. In round nine, Speelman, playing White, looked a sound bet to take half a point away from Nigel Short, who was the only man within half a point of Sadler. But Speelman played his worst game of the tournament and collapsed to defeat. With Sadler only drawing his game, that result allowed Short to draw level. In the tenth round, however, Sadler had an even worse accident.

He was Black against Mark Hebdon and played his favourite Queen's Gambit Accepted, an opening that has brought him a string of fine wins in international tournaments. This game looked for a long time like adding another notch to his tally. Ignoring White's pawn sacrifice with 7.e4, Sadler got on with his development and, when Hebdon sacrificed with 18.Bxh7+, it looked more an attempt to confuse matters than a combination he believed in.

As Sadler cautiously and accurately chose the right squares for his king, Hebdon did well to keep his attack alive, but when they reached the diagram position after 34...f3, he seemed to have run out of steam. White does not even threaten fxg4 because it would allow a check by queen or rook on h1. In this position, Black could have played 34...d3 or 34...Qb3 (threatening

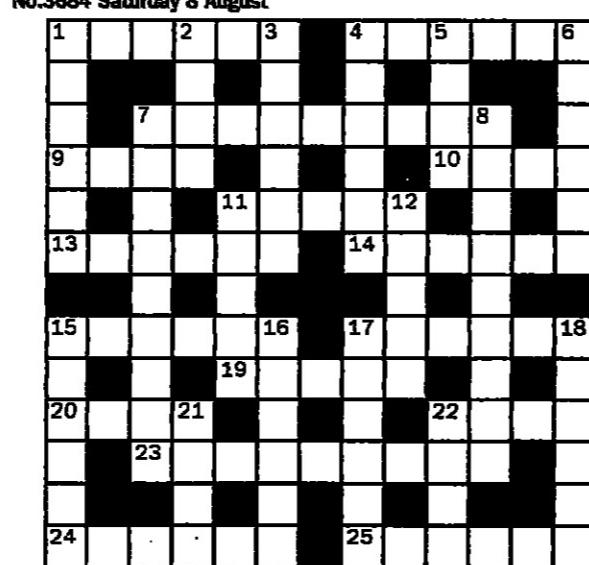


Qe3+) with a big advantage. The move he chose was good too: after 34...e4, Black attacks g5 with queen and rook. White's 35.Nh2+ Rxh7 36.fxg4 Rxh7 wins for Black was his last hope, but 36...Qh5 would have led to a simple win for Black. Instead Sadler blundered - presumably in horrible time trouble - and after 36...Qes?? 37.Rf1+ Black was dead.

White: Mark Hebdon
Black: Matthew Sadler
Queen's Gambit Accepted
British Championship 1998
1 d4 d5 20 Rxe5 Qxe5
2 c4 dx4 21 Nc3+ Kd5
3 Nf3 Nf6 22 Nd6 Rxd6
4 e3 e6 23 exd5 Qf5
5 Bxc4 c5 24 Ne4 Rh8
6 0-0 a6 25 g4 Qd5
7 e4 b5 26 h5+ Kf7
8 Bd3 Bb7 27 Ng5+ Kf6
9 Re1 cxd4 28 Qd2 e5
10 a4 b4 29 Ne1+ Kf7
11 e5 Nf7 30 Qg5 Bc8
12 Bg5 Be7 31 Qg6+ Kf8
13 Bxe7 Qxe7 32 Nge4
14 Nbd2 Nc6 33 Rcl Rxd5
15 Rcl 0-0 34 f2 e4
16 h4 Rf8 35 Nh7+ Rxh7
17 Qe2 Nc5 36 fxg4 Rxh7
18 Bxh7+ Rxe7 37 Rf1+ resigns
19 Ng5+ Kh6

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3684 Saturday 8 August



ACROSS

- 1 Battled (6)
- 4 Titled person (6)
- 7 Disconcert (9)
- 9 Front of lower jaw (4)
- 10 Unharmed (4)
- 11 Highland dance (5)
- 13 Ice-cream dish (6)
- 14 Advanced years (3,3)
- 15 Embrace (6)
- 17 Polar region (6)
- 19 Rub out (5)
- 20 Comply with (4)
- 22 Seaweed (4)
- 23 Tibetan leader (5,4)
- 24 Inferior (6)
- 25 Administer (6)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Purr, 3 Collates (Percolates), 9 Demur, 10 Arrane, 11 Err, 13 Negligent, 14 Export, 16 Aspire, 18 Utilities, 20 Gir, 22 Averie, 23 Optic, 25 Enduring, 26 Able. DOWN: 1 Padre, 2 Rim, 4 Orange, 5 Lorries, 6 Tinkering, 7 Sceptre, 8 Iron, 12 Reprimand, 14 Educate, 15 Rainier, 17 Pigeon, 19 Soon, 21 Niche, 24 Tab.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all; dealer East			
North	♦J 9 8 7 3	♦Q 5 4	♦K 9 7 4
South	♦A		
West	♦4 2		
	♦A 10 3	♦K J 9 8 6	♦10 6
	♦Q J 8 3	♦K Q 10 9 7	
	♦J 6 4 2		
East			
	♦A		
	♦K Q 10 6 5	♦7 2	♦A 5 2
	♦Q 8 3	♦8 5 3	

IF YOU look at all four hands on this deal, it seems impossible to find a play that could persuade South's opponents to drop a trick in defence against Four Spades, a contract which, it seems certain, has four sure losers. Give up? Well read on.

East opened One Heart, South overcalled with One Spade, and West raised his partner to Two Hearts. North bid a firm Four Spades and, although Five Hearts might have proved relatively cheap, East judged well in deciding to defend. Against Four Spades, West started with the ace and another heart and declarer ruffed the third round. Losing to ♦A was inescapable and there were insufficient entries to eliminate the clubs, cash the top diamonds, and exit with a trump (hoping for the singleton ♦A with only two diamonds). South found an interesting, and not at all obvious shot when he crossed to ♦A - the key play - before leading ♦J. East won with his ace and stopped to think.

Why should declarer have crossed to dummy before leading trumps? Was it possible that he was missing ♦Q as well as ♦A? If so, then West held the missing queen and it was now bare. In order to promote a trick for his partner's supposed queen, East led a fourth round of hearts. Gratefully, declarer discarded his losing diamond and was able to claim.

It really is difficult to blame East for this débâcle; it could only have happened to a thoughtful player. I suppose that the only consolation is that you do not meet many Souths who would even think of playing ♦A before touching trumps.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY

CONGRATULATIONS to the German player Michael Meyburg on becoming only the second person to win the Monte Carlo World Championship twice. The only other person who has accomplished this is Bill Robertie. Meyburg defeated Elliot Winslow of the US in the final. Congratulations also to Richard Whitehouse, a regular at London's Double Fives, who won the Last Chance.

To those not familiar with tournament formats, your entry fee (in the case of the world championships a not insignificant \$750) entitles you not only to play in the main championship but also in the Consolation once you have lost in the main event. Elimination from the Consolation puts you into the Last Chance - in the world championship there is also a second Consolation. Each tournament has shorter matches than the one before and less prize money but they are still very much worth winning.

Even after you have been knocked out of all the tournaments you can enter mini-jackpots. These are eight-player tournaments that require a new entry fee where the winner takes all - jackpots at different entry fees are normally available. When you have finally had enough tournament play you can play money games, either head-to-head or in chouettes.

The availability of so much backgammon requires some discipline to make sure you get enough sleep each night. Sadly, I know from personal experience that very short nights become the norm.

The backgammon circus now moves on to Dallas for the bi-annual World Cup where, in addition to the usual tournaments, there is also a World Chouette Championship. This is the first time that this has been attempted, and it will be interesting to see how well it goes. Matches in the World Cup are played as the best of five 11-point matches rather than the longer (up to 25 points) match format which is used at Monte Carlo. This is generally considered to be a fairer format as a single freak eight- or 16-point cube need no longer decide the outcome of an entire match.

For those interested in trying their hand at a tournament for the first time, there will be backgammon tournaments at the second Mind Sports Olympiad to be held at the Novotel Hotel, in Hammersmith, London, from 24-30 August. Entry fees are expected to be in the £10-£25 range.

For further details, send an SAE to Mind Sports Olympiad, PO box 13388, London NW3 2ZP.

Chris Bray

TRAVEL

Summer flights go for a song

In an unexpected fit of generosity, British Airways has announced a host of cut-price deals to tempt travellers. But, as Simon Calder explains, you'll have to be quick to take best advantage of BA's budget munificence

Hold page 19! On Friday afternoons, travel tends to be a sleepy corner of any newspaper, so I don't get to say that very often. But, at 5.30pm yesterday, news came through of air fares so absurdly cheap that this could either be the best weekend ever for travellers (if you bag a bargain) or the worst (if you fail to get a cheap deal, or are a competitor).

British Airways had a slow start to the summer. The blame has been heaped upon the World Cup, which by now seems to be held responsible for as many calamities as El Niño. Whatever the cause, the effect is that BA is off-loading a vast number of seats – two million – at fares at an all-time low.

As our navigation charts show, almost all the best deals are within Europe. Ryanair and easyJet will say that most of the fares and destinations are targeted to cause maximum harm to BA's low-cost rivals. But whether you are after a last-minute August holiday, a short break in autumn or a string of business trips, this page will help you make the most of the aviation dogfight.

Q: When must I book?
A: Between 9am on Saturday and midnight on Sunday.

Q: By phone?
A: If you have a credit or debit card, call 0345 222111.

Q: But last time there was a special deal, with cut-price Concorde seats, I couldn't get through!
A: This time, there are about 1,000 times more seats available, so you could be in luck. BA says it will have lots of extra phone staff on duty.

Q: And the Internet?
A: BA has established a dedicated website for the offer at www.britishairways.com/countdown

Q: Call me old-fashioned, but I prefer to deal with humans. What about my travel agent?
A: Good idea; these tickets are available through IATA travel agents (which means almost all of them). Most agents can access the airline's booking computer directly, so once you're in, you should be able to secure all the tickets you need. But because your agent stands to make a grand total of only £5.50 commission on a flight to Nice and back, so he or she may not be delighted to see you. And besides, few travel agents will be open on Sunday.

Q: So what's your advice?
A: Try a British Airways Travel Shop. The airline's own travel agent has 24 branches around Britain, and some – in London, Manchester and Edinburgh – will be open on Sunday. They could be crowded, mind.

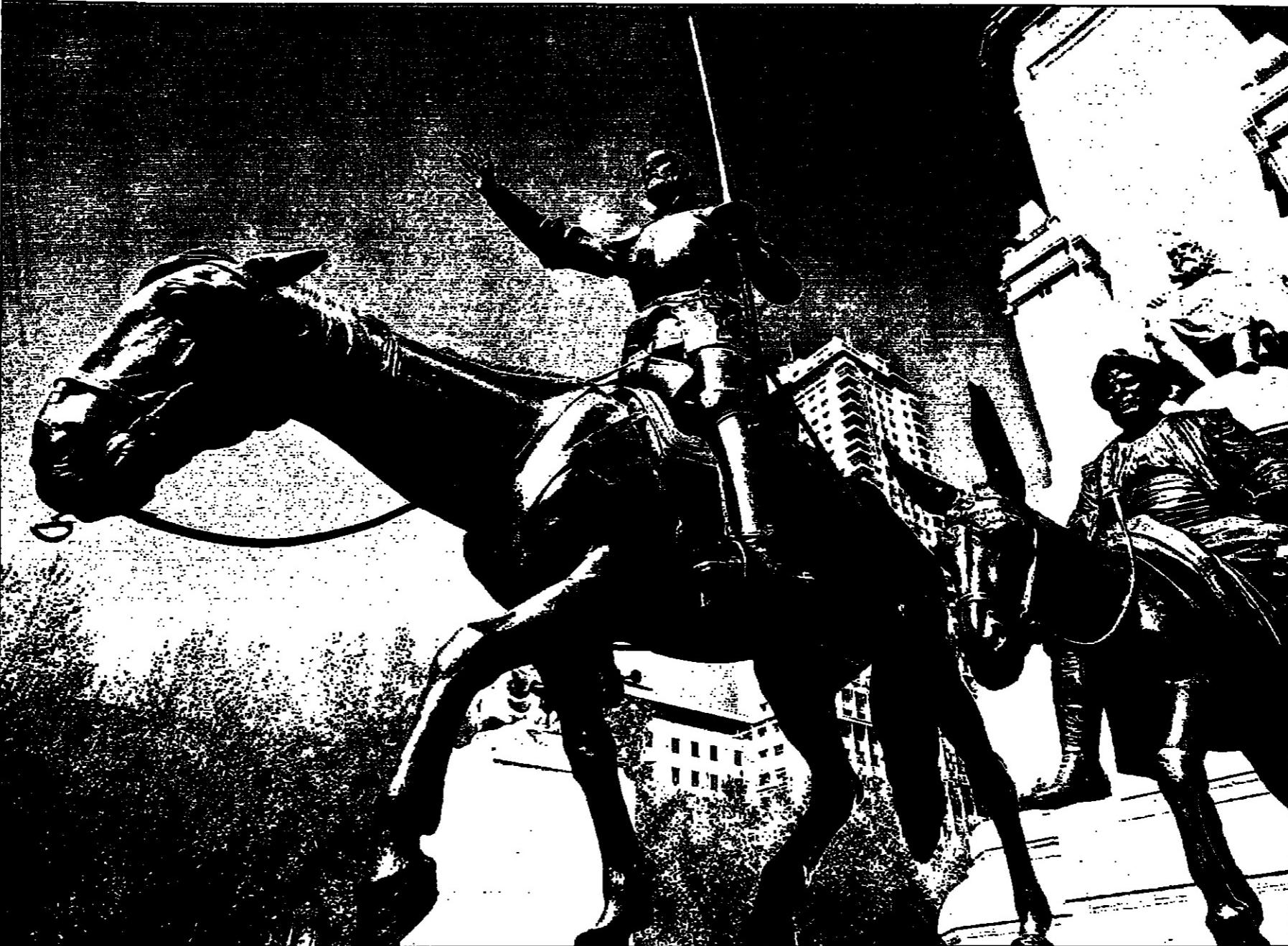
Q: Your queue-busting strategy?
A: Get to the BA Travel Shop above Victoria Station in London shortly before it opens at 6am on Sunday. I'd be surprised if there's much of a queue. But you run the risk that the tickets you want may already have been snapped up by bulk-buying bargain hunters.

Q: Does that mean there's no limit on the number of flights any individual can book?

PLASTIC BERTRAND, where are you? We need a re-make of your greatest (and only) hit. The Belgian crooner's aviation anthem "Ca Plane Pour Moi" is inappropriate for Brussels-bound travellers on Virgin Express.

Last weekend, hundreds of passengers with firm bookings on Richard Branson's European airline were refused seats aboard flights between London and the Belgian capital. For a moment in the check-in queue at Heathrow last Saturday morning, I thought I was about to get an accelerated journey. "We have a flight leaving in 15 minutes. Would you like to take it?"

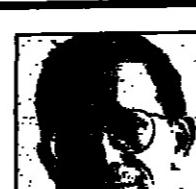
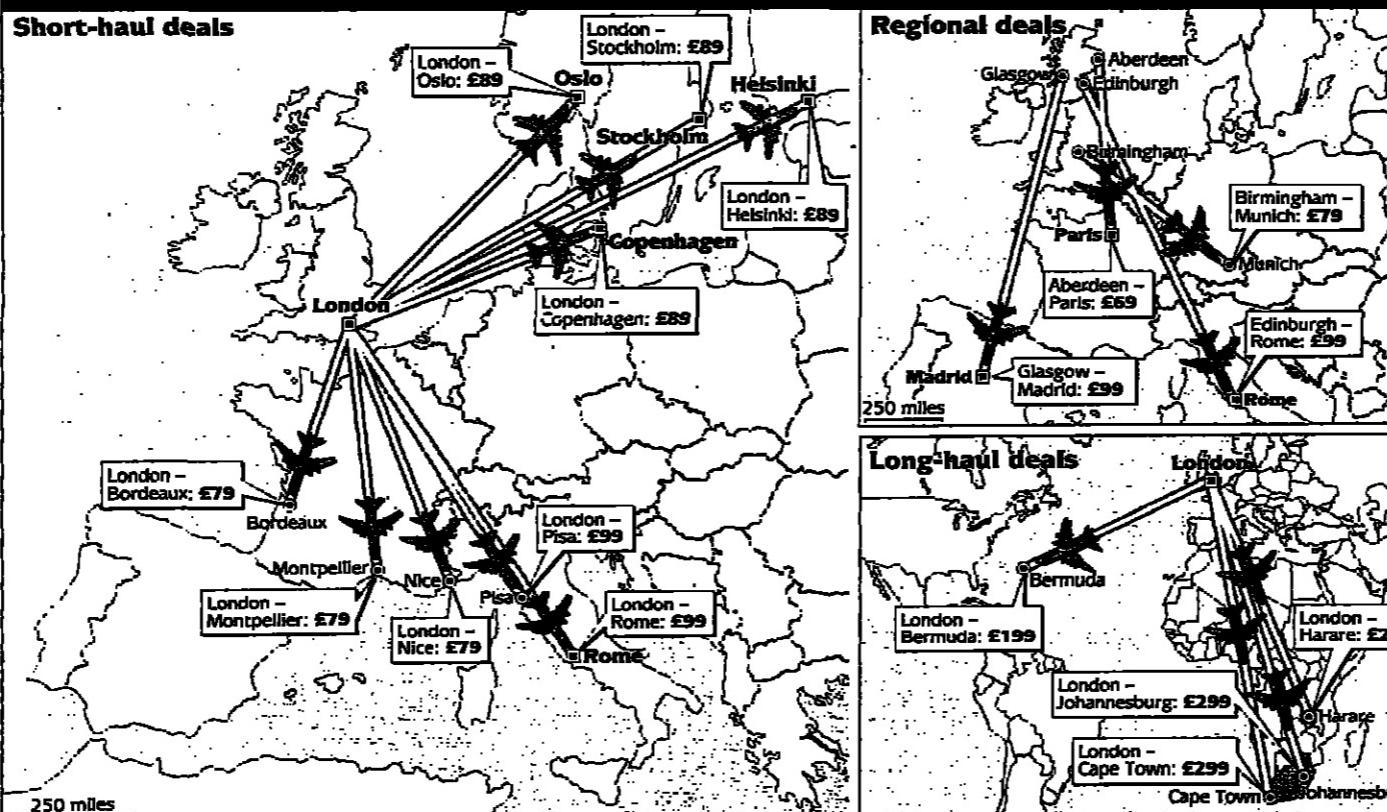
But this turned out to be a case of Ca Plane Pas Toi. The official was actually talking to the lady next to me. Virgin Express staff were combing the queue identifying passengers planning to connect at the Belgian capital to other destinations, and whisking them away to the first available plane. But, the official explained, "If you're only travelling to Brussels, you won't be allowed to check in for a 6.30am flight. We'll give you a ticket for a Eurostar train which will get you to Brussels at four this afternoon."



Only £99 away from Glasgow, Madrid is just one of the many destinations available in BA's summer flights giveaway

Brian Harris

THE BEST FLIGHT DEALS FROM BA



SIMON CALDER

After an hour or so, the departure gate got even livelier when a Boeing load of passengers turned up for a different flight

punter's point of view this was a straight case of overbooking: the flight was leaving, but without a lot of people who had paid a lot of money to travel on it – and to reach the airport at an unearthly hour.

Leanne Hayter, who was also refused boarding, had left her

home in Northampton at 4am. She was facing the prospect of getting to her destination 10 hours late. "When I arrived at 6am, I saw people thronging about and thought there must be trouble," she told me. "I'm surprised this can happen on Virgin."

When airlines overbook, they pay compensation. I asked the official what my entitlement was under European Union rules; the EU sets down minimum payments for passengers delayed due to overbooking. "We're a non-lata carrier [ie not a member of the International Air Transport Association]," he said. "So we're not bound by those rules."

Instead of cash, passengers were handed a letter from Jim Swigart, president of Virgin Express, setting out the compensation for what he called "your inconvenience" as well as the additional expenses or time lost that you might have incurred".

The letter promised a free flight to Brussels and back – except the flight isn't free because passengers have to pay £25 in tax for the privilege, and the offer is hedged with restrictions, such as having to book at least a week in advance, and

travel within the next four months. Passengers who decided instead to abandon their journey were denied even this compensation – instead, Virgin Express offered merely a refund of the money you paid. To add insult to inconvenience, there were no instant refunds, so travellers who may have paid for their tickets weeks in advance are having to wait still longer to get the money back. Faced with the prospect of spending most of the day getting to Brussels, I rebooked instead on the 6.50am flight on Sunday.

Next morning I received a boarding card rather than a refund, and even got as far as the departure gate. But because of what was described as "staff shortage", the flight was delayed by an hour, then indefinitely.

After an hour or so, the departure gate got even livelier when an entire 757-load of passengers and crew turned up expecting to board a BA flight to Copenhagen; Virgin Express had outstayed its welcome at the gate.

The delay extended to the point where the passengers would not reach central Brussels until lunchtime. By this time my intended long

weekend in Belgium was turning into a day trip. So I abandoned the trip, musing that the slogan of Virgin Express ("Your right to fly for less") could usefully be amended by deleting the word "for".

ANOTHER SLOGAN that caused a kerfuffle: "The next time you find yourself in one of our departure lounges about to board one of our flights, better make it an espresso".

British Airways used this line to promote its Shuttle flights. But a passenger complained that the ad was inaccurate because he found flights between Manchester and London were frequently delayed or cancelled. The Advertising Standards Authority rejected the complaint, but in the process BA revealed its punctuality record: one in eight flights fails to depart within 15 minutes of the scheduled departure time – even poorer than trouble-prone Virgin Trains.

By the way, here is the sympathetic response you can expect on telling a pal that you've been bumped from a Virgin Express plane. "Gosh, that sounds uncomfortable," said my friend Sue. "I hope not from too great a height."

THE LONG-HAUL branch of the Virgin empire is rather more generous when offloading passengers. Suzy Dietrich of London checked in at Heathrow for her Virgin Atlantic flight to Johannesburg. "Would you mind flying BA instead?", she was asked. She didn't – particularly when told the only inconvenience was a 45-minute delay, and the reward was a free flight to South Africa and back.

"YOU REFER to passengers being strapped into an aircraft seat", writes John S Smith of Hovertravel, whose flagship (or is it a flagplane?) I described last week.

"Whilst the hovercraft cabin is more akin to an airline than a ferry, we certainly do not strap passengers into their seats. Although passengers remain seated during the 35-minute crossing, they are certainly not restrained from moving."

Mr Smith also rejects my suggestion that the abolition of duty-free, which comes into effect on 1 July next year, could threaten the future of the craft. "We plan to refurbish them next year, and to operate the hovercraft well into the next Millennium, continuing the tradition of the fastest Channel crossings."

WHERE THE BARGAINS AREN'T

BEWARE! HIDDEN among the long lists of fares are some for which you'd be foolish to pay the "sale" fare, unless you need to dodge the "Saturday night minimum stay" rule. These are the deals I would touch with a credit card.

London to Athens: £179; a much cheaper fare is available on easyJet for £141.70. London to Istanbul: £179; charters, or scheduled flights on Turkish Airlines or Istanbul Airlines, should be cheaper than this one.

London to Dubai: £259; at this time of year, discount agents should be able to offer comparable fares with fewer restrictions.

Q: These offers always have loads of restrictions, weekend surcharges etc. What's the catch?

A: One word – availability. If you fancy flying out from Glasgow on a Friday afternoon, via Heathrow and to Madrid, you'll probably be out of luck. But wet Wednesdays in November should be wide open. Be flexible with dates and destinations.

Q: If I cancel, can I get a refund?
A: No. You must pay in full at the time of booking, and no refunds are available.

Q: And I suppose changing reservation dates or times is out of the question, too?

A: Correct. But bear in mind that some of these fares are so ridiculously low that it may be worth taking a punt just in case.

Q: Any special one-way fares?

A: No, but these deals are way below normal BA one-way prices. So buy a return, and throw away the inbound half.

Q: Can I fly to one destination and back from another (eg out to Stockholm and back from Oslo)?
A: No; these so-called "open jaw" arrangements aren't permitted.

Q: How soon can I travel?

A: Today, if you like.

Q: When do I need to be back by?

A: All outbound travel must be completed by 30 November, but you needn't come home until a month after that – so this could be chance to book your Christmas holiday.

Q: Are taxes included?

A: Broadly, yes – the rules were changed at the start of this year to ensure that all pre-payable taxes are included in quoted air fares. But some countries impose additional taxes which can be paid only at the airport of departure.

Q: Does the deal apply to domestic flights, too?

A: Yes, but the bargains aren't very special. KLM UK (0990 074074) has had a jolly good seat sale on domestic routes for some weeks, and £59 return between Scotland and Northern Ireland and London seems to be the going rate.

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The village of Aberdaron, Gwynedd: 'a lovely spot with views across a wide bay'

Michael St Maur Sheil/Colorific!

'You should have been here last week' is the usual line about holidays in Britain. But, after seven wet days on the Lleyn Peninsula, Mick Webb rather wishes he'd been there this week instead

A week is a long time in Wales

With my balance almost completely lost, I tottered on a narrow ledge, one arm grasping a struggling child and the other flailing wildly, while the heavy seas crashed menacingly below us.

There was just time enough to ponder the folly of involving the whole family in hearty adventures before I miraculously found a foothold on the slippery rock.

The vertiginous scramble in search of St Mary's Well was just part of a week of outdoor fun on the Lleyn Peninsula on the very western edge of North Wales.

The plan was to forget computer-games, TV and packaged entertainment and drag our children (six of them from two families, plus a dog and a German exchange student) kicking and screaming into the fresh air.

How the week panned out:

Sunday 26 July

Arrive in Aberdaron after long drive through driving rain. Booked into a farm campsite on high windswept field. "You're a braver man than me," the farmer observes helpfully.

After battling like sailors in a round-the-world yacht race, we vanquish the elements and three tents were erected. Good team-building exercise, we reckon.

Monday

Wake up in bright sunshine to discover what a lovely spot this is with views across a wide bay, and only a gentle stroll away from the village of Aberdaron with its two stores, pub, excellent bakery, tea-shop, and small hotel that was still offering "last-minute vacancies".

Other holidaymakers are not much in evidence, which means the curving beach was mostly empty. This is sea for bathting with, rather than bathing in, but there are plenty of other distractions for all ages: falling off a windsurfer, building variations on sandcastles – the children make a dragon out of sand; and collecting pebbles, seaweed and yucky things – the younger ones find two dead dogfish and an equally defunct plaice.

Tuesday

Lifting the tent flap reveals ... nothing, apart from a very low, very wet cloud, that appears to have settled in for the duration. We pack picnic and set out on cliff-top walk to St Mary's Well (the Ordnance Survey map shows several wells, and an equal number of sheep-dips). We meet a sheep-farmer using a quad bike to shepherd his flock, most of which have nasty coughs.

"Do you think the weather'll improve?" we ask.
"Oh, yes," he says. "Next year." This is supposed to be a splendid

area for wildlife but we don't find any of the rare crow-like birds called choughs, and the visibility is too poor to see if there are any seals down on the rocks.

Blanca (10 years old) does spot a yellow-hammer which, just as the bird-book says, sings "a little-bit-of-bread-and-no-cheese". Well, it does if you know that's what it's supposed to be singing. Fortunately our picnic is composed of lots of very good large bread rolls and loads of cheese. Unfortunately, we have to eat standing up as the grass is saturated.

Silas (five) has such wet trousers he can't walk, but we carry him and press on to St Mary's Well. It's not easy to find – we heard later of someone who's been looking for it on and off for 50 years. But then you don't expect to find a well halfway up a cliff, which is where it is. Helen (13) thinks the lack of signposting is deliberate, as it's so dangerous getting there.

After my narrow escape from disaster, we fill a bottle with the water "the sweetest in Wales" (according to a man in the pub at Aberdaron), though by the time we get it back to the tent it had begun to pong. Some things just don't travel, do they?

Wednesday
Weather no better. Expedition to buy wellies and socks to nearest town: Abersoch. That's what the grown-ups pretend but the real reason is

to stock up on cheaper booze than we can get in Aberdaron. The store there provides sweet little candy-striped bags to conceal your wine-bottle, ("just in case you meet the vicar") and perhaps that is what doubles the price.

Abersoch is a good place to buy booze and wellies of all colours. It's a bustling little holiday port full of yachting-types in very clean clothes

the setting sun gives to the foam on the breaking waves.

We all are. We spend ages throwing the coloured pebbles at a plastic bottle, bank up the bonfire, sing songs and only Silas (five) is worried as he thinks our car will be locked in the car-park.

Thursday

More rain. Outlook worse. Confined to tents, one of which (mine) has almost collapsed, as a pole has broken. Running or rather sitting down, repairs are effected. The children don't seem bothered by the weather – the older ones set up a casino in one tent, the others play for hours in the cars and are joined by other small damp waifs from around the camp-site. One of their fathers comes and warms his children that car (his own anyway) are not for verify this.

Friday
No improvement in the weather.

Adults becoming rather moody and, in one case, almost clinically depressed.

We start drinking at lunch-time rather than in the evening. The children, on the other hand seem perfectly sanguine, and join wholeheartedly in the composition of a song about our holiday with the following immortal chorus:

Oh how we love Aberdaron,

Oh what a beautiful bay

The spirits of Bardsey are calling,

A pity the skies are so grey

In the afternoon a trip is organised to Whistling Sands, a beautiful bay owned by the National Trust where a dip in the cold water revives flagging

spirits. The rock-pools here are well-stocked and a boy from Manchester called Graham achieves immediate hero-status with our children for his prowess in catching crabs.

Back at the camp, a man and his family arrive with a trailer filled with kites. He's a professional kite-maker and soon the sky is humming with strange flying kites.

Adults repair to the pub and return at midnight. Thomas the German repairs to another pub and returns with various new acquaintances at 3am.

Saturday

An ironic but brief burst of sunshine accompanies the taking down and packing-up. We drive home past the rather more conventional holiday sites we might have visited: the stately home at Plas yr Rhw; a Butlin's holiday camp with day-rates for visitors; the Blaenau Ffestiniog railway; and the extraordinary Italianate village of Portmeirion. I'd like to have stopped off there but by now it is pouring with rain again.

Overall, amazingly enough, everyone seems to have enjoyed the experience. Clarrie (15) says she wasn't at all jealous of her friends who were clubbing in Minorca, and Alec (10) summed it up as "cool".

It certainly was. And wet. And cheap – £4 per family per night for the campsite.

St. Catherine's Monastery & Petra

visiting St. Catherine's Monastery and the Rose Red City of Petra

The convenient location of the 4-star Coral Hilton Hotel in Nuweiba makes it possible to combine the fascinating sights of St Catherine's Monastery with the "rose red" city of Petra. The journey is further made possible by the direct flights from London Gatwick to Sharm el-Sheikh and the regular ferry services to Aqaba.

Our journey commences with a four-night stay at the Coral Hilton Resort at Nuweiba. This will be our base both for relaxation on the Red Sea coast to enjoy the winter sunshine and our visits to St Catherine's Monastery and the Coloured Canyon. On Day 5 transfer by hydrofoil to Aqaba and travel north by road to Petra and the Inter-Continental for the next three nights.

During the stay at Petra we will visit various areas of the site (entrance fee not included) and make optional visits to Little Petra and Wadi Rum, the location of David Lean's film "Lawrence of Arabia". On Days 6/7 we fly to Aqaba for the regular passenger service to Sharm el-Sheikh and the return flight to London Gatwick.

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The world's safest airlines

THE RAIN MAN was wrong: the world's best air safety record does not belong to Qantas, even though the Australian airline has never suffered a passenger fatality. An American carrier, Southwest, also boasts a fatality-free record, and since it started up in 1971 has flown 6 million flights – against a mere million by Qantas.

The best performance – after Southwest – is SAS. The Scandinavian airline has flown 5.4m journeys without a fatality. Ansett of Australia has managed 2.5m accident-free flights.

The latest air accident figures from the US Department of Transportation, which cover aviation since 1970, reveal many other scheduled airlines that have achieved a "fatal event rate" of zero.

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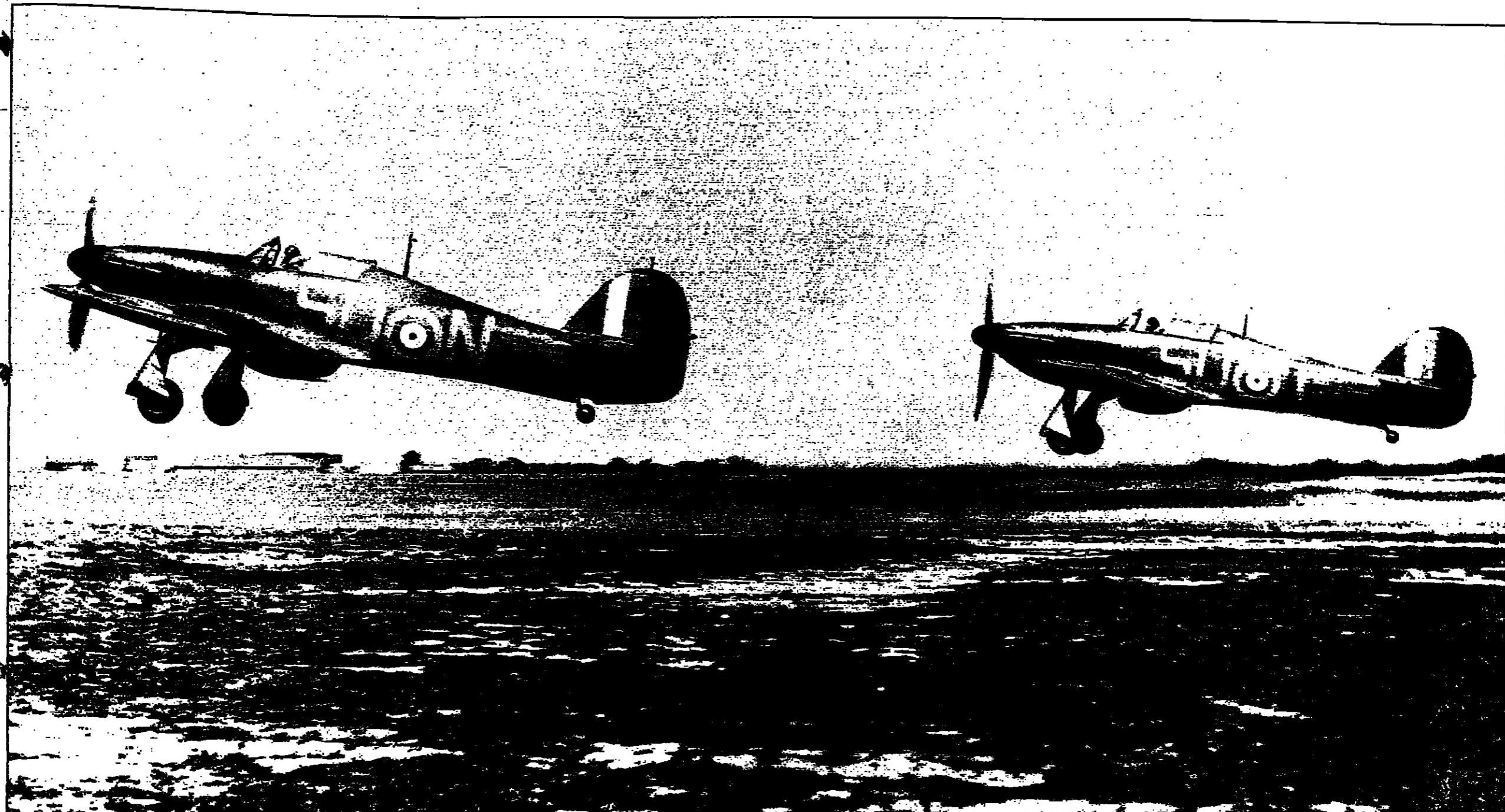
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Where the few live on

The Battle of Britain is still celebrated in museums across the South-east. By Guy de la Bédoyère



Hawker Hurricanes bore the brunt of the conflict; these fighters are taking off from RAF Hawkinge near Folkestone, now home to the Kent Battle of Britain Museum

IT'S about this time of year that minds cast back to the summer of 1940. The Battle of Britain, which officially lasted from 10 July to 31 October 1940, has become part of modern myth. It even became legend during the war itself. The British line has always been that successful resistance to German bombing caused Hitler to abandon his plans to invade Britain. The German line has always been that they were changing their minds anyway.

Either way the battle is replayed in endless airshows around the country. Today there are more airworthy Spitfires than there have been for 40 years, though in fact only one of these saw service during the battle. (There are very few Hurricanes; they bore the brunt of the conflict.) It is a strange comment on our own time that so much effort goes into keeping these planes going, but there is simply no more magnificent sight or sound in the world of aviation.

The real battle now exists only in photographs and film. Unless, of course, you have time to visit some of the eccentric and memorable museums in south-eastern England.

RAF Manston, near Ramsgate, was in the front line. In August 1940 it was constantly attacked. The worst day was the 24th, when 20 Ger-

man bombers did so much damage, despite attempts by 264 Squadron's Defiants to beat them off, that the field was practically put out of action.

The old RAF station is now Kent International Airport. On the north side is the RAF Manston Hurricane and Spitfire Memorial Building.

The building is essentially two large rooms, with the Hurricane II in the eastern half and the Spitfire XVI in the west. Scattered around are relics dug from battle crash sites, including a pair of Hurricane engines. Pilot Officer KC Campbell's engine is in an astonishing condition.

More vivid is the wrecked Rolls-Royce Merlin III from Sgt. Franciszek Jan Kozlowski's Hurricane I of 501 Squadron. He was shot down on 18 August 1940 but baled out and survived, only to be killed three years later over France. The pulverised front half of Kozlowski's engine, with pistons and rods bent like plastic, testifies to the force of hitting the ground at 400 mph-plus. That kind of crash often led to the engine reaching a depth of 18ft or more.

All of which makes the contents of the Kent Battle of Britain Museum at nearby Hawkinge – perched on the hills above Folkestone and the Channel Tunnel entrance – utterly astonishing. Hawkinge was also in the front line, but is little changed.

AIRCRAFT Museums

THE ONLY surviving Battle of Britain Spitfire in working order is a Mark II, serial number P7350, built at Castle Bromwich in Lord Nuffield's factory. It makes fairly regular appearances in the summer but lives at RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire, where there is a visitors' centre (01526 344041).

RAF MANSTON Museum (01843 823351, ext 6219) is open daily all year round, 10am-4pm, staying open till 5pm between May and September. To get there take the A253 from Canterbury to Ramsgate, turning north on the B2048 at Minster and, shortly afterwards, east on the B2190. Open

KENT BATTLE of Britain Museum at Hawkinge (01303 693140) is open from Easter until the end of October, closing at 5pm (4pm in October).

Admission: adults £3, senior citizens £2.50, children £1.50. It is accessible most easily from the A260 (off the A2 between Canterbury and Dover).

THE SHOREHAM Aircraft Museum is in Shoreham High Street, signposted from the A225 between Eynsford and Oxtord (01959 524416). If coming from farther afield, leave the M25 at junction 3 and take the A20 1.5 miles east to Farningham and then join the A225. Open

Sundays only, from May to September; 10am-5pm. Admission £1; children and students free.

THERE IS also the Brenzett Aeronautical Museum in Ivychurch Road, Brenzett, near New Romney on the A2070 (01233 627911). Apart from fragments of Battle of Britain planes there are other pieces such as experimental versions of the Dam Buster bombs. Open Sundays and Bank Holidays, 11am to 5.30pm, from Easter to 31 October, and Wednesday to Friday (afternoons only) from July to September.

down and severely burned on 3 September 1940 and wrote his book about that extraordinary summer during the long process of recovery.

Two of Hillary's friends in 603 Squadron were Colin Pinckney and Peter Pease. Pinckney was shot down on 29 August. His Spitfire crashed in Dymchurch and the control column is on display at Hawkinge. So, too, are fragments of Peter Pease's Spitfire, which was shot down on 15 September 1940 (Battle of Britain Day). Pease was killed; Pinckney survived, but died later in the war.

It is remarkable to see fragments of Spitfires from Hillary's pages. But they also serve as illustrations of a controversial activity. Many of these planes were excavated 20 years ago. It is now illegal to dig up any military aeroplane without MoD consent.

Where the pilot is thought still to be incarcerated this is always denied, though this raises interesting disagreements with relatives who want proper graves.

Hillary said that, I still didn't feel very much at ease. This is a private collection, as is made plain to visitors. No photography or even written recording is allowed, and there are no guidebooks for sale.

It is a pity, because this is a part of history that belongs to us all.

Closer to London – and in many ways the most intimate monument to the battle – is Shoreham Aircraft Museum. This is also privately owned and is far smaller than Hawkinge, but is superbly presented by the proprietor Geoff Nutkins, a first-class aviation artist.

Here the main exhibit is the magnificent Merlin engine from Sgt. John Lansell's Hurricane of 607 Squadron. Lansell had down from Tangmere, only to be shot down and killed in the afternoon of 17 September 1940.

There are many other items, including a blackboard from a Biggin Hill pub signed by pilots during the war. There are several colossal Jumo 211 engines from bombers and also the vast BMW radial motor from a Focke-Wulf FW190.

If you get for a Second World War aviation trail round Kent, try to pass through Kingsnorth, just south of Ashford. Here I found a Pratt and Whitney twin-row Wasp radial motor which came from an American B24 Liberator ditched in the Channel. Now it decorates a roadside scrap dealer's display.

It is a reminder that, whoever won the Battle of Britain, the air war had a long way to run and many people on both sides were to die as a consequence.

A dream of a train journey

Yearning after the lost romance of travel?
Take the sleeper to Scotland and rediscover the glamour of the train. By Virginia Ironside

all night – that you really are travelling from A to B.

Going by sleeper is a blissfully childlike experience. The size of the cabin is like a Wendy house; everything is tiny. There's a lovely little wooden ladder that hangs from brass hooks on the wall, that you use to climb into the upper bunk, which is so narrow that there's no room for anything but the most straightforward hankie-panky. But who wants hankie-panky, anyway, when they're travelling by sleeper?

Rail companies have tried to kill off the sleeper, but it's still the best way to travel, far more civilised than by air, because you get the feeling of distance



The Snoozing Scotsman: the West Highland Sleeper

proper feather pillows in cotton covers – none of your floral nylon slips covering lumps of poly-cottons.

The beds are narrow enough to fit only the slimmest of bodies, lined in crisp, clean sheets (no duvets here) and headed by

Clothes They Stood Up In) and just by your head as you lie down is a little elasticated rack in which to keep your bottle of water (provided), your book and your specs.

As you travel through the night you wake up – but not unpleasantly. You wake to hear the clanking of the trains as one part dialogue from the other. At Glasgow you can open your blind and watch the early birds clambering aboard. There is the feeling that sacks of post are being hauled into the guard's compartment. Everyone is

working away while you, in your nightdress, just sleep, and occasionally get up and observe, all to the jiggety-jog of the train, which is as relaxing as being, once again, in your mother's womb.

In the morning, breakfast is served by a splendid sleeper attendant in a red coat with brass buttons, who gives you omelettes, corn flakes, butter, a tiny pot of jam, tea or coffee, a croissant, and that mysterious circle of processed cheese, presumably for the Germans or Dutch. Or you can wander down to the restaurant where you can have more choice and where, the night before, you could have wiled away the hours eating and drinking.

On the way back, we waited at a tiny station in Scotland. As the train came in, the door opened and our sleeper attendant appeared. "Miss Ironside, I presume," he said as he came out onto the platform, took our suitcases and led us to our tiny cabin.

And we looked forward to another luxurious night, back to London. Jiggety-jog, jiggety-jog, through the blackness, jiggety-jog...

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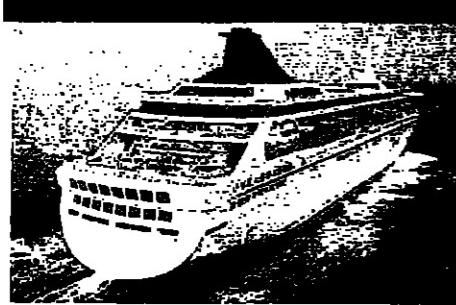
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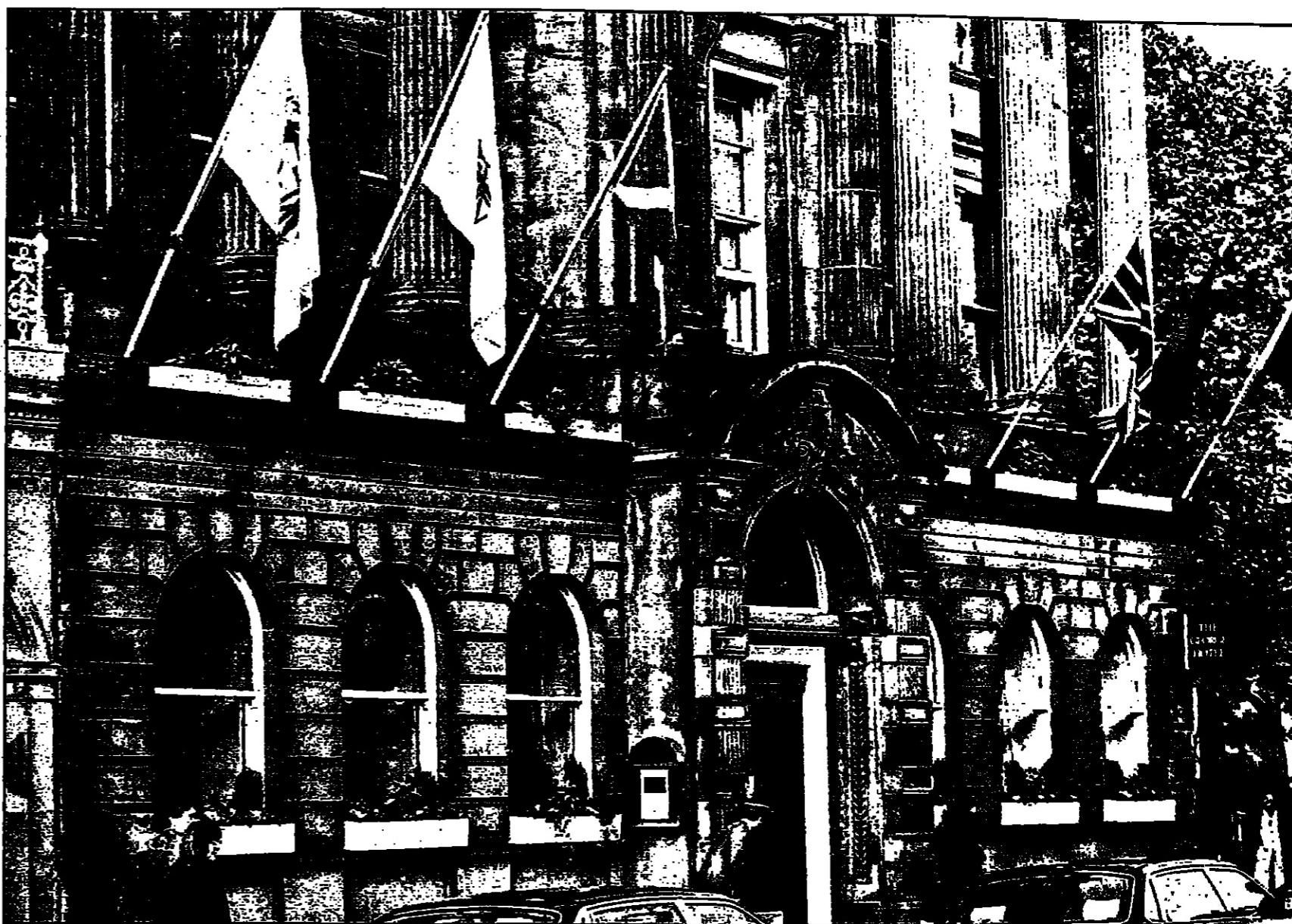
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On the trail of good beer: the George Hotel, left, and The Cloisters



Cloisters photograph: Michael Jackson

Distilling the flavour of the Fringe

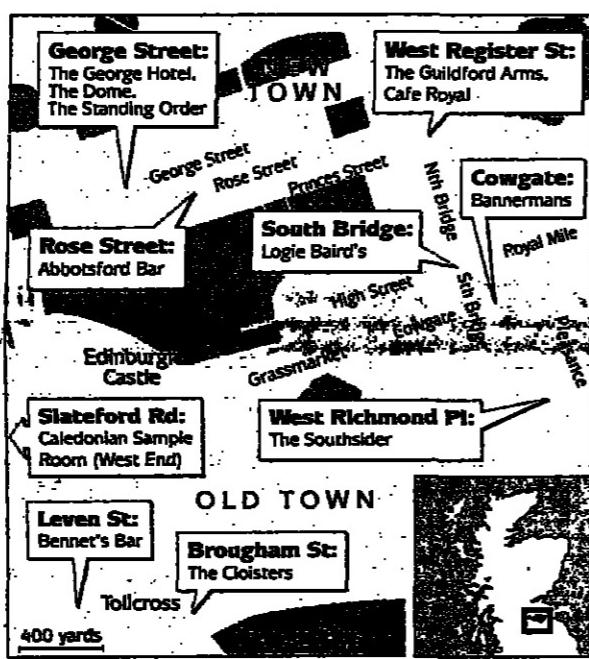
Edinburgh pubs are rightly famed for the quality of their beer, the stupendous quantity consumed, and their imaginative opening hours. As the Festival week cranks up, Michael Jackson offers the definitive pub guide to a city where banks have become bars

If the Protestant clergy and cautious bankers of Scotland's capital ever had any reservations about the roistering during Edinburgh Festival week, they had better swallow those doubts. With the Fringe already raised, and the official festival starting next weekend, some of the city's finest pints are being sunk in two forged banks and a past parsonage.

Guests at the George Hotel, one of the festival's social centres, need only cross the road. The hotel's Corinthian portico faces the even grander example at the Dome (14 George Street). Can there be a more spectacular pub, bar or grill-room in the whole of Britain than this, in the former national headquarters of the Commercial Bank of Scotland? With its reliefs of Prudence, Learning, Agriculture, Mechanical Engineering and Enterprise, this 1840s temple to Scottish demands to be celebrated with the fermented or distilled product of Borders barley. Seeing and being seen under its 100-ft glass dome are Edinburgh's movers and shakers, some of whom prefer margaritas or Chilean chardonnays, but others cleaving to Deuchair's aromatic, dry, almost loopy, India Pale Ale. This the smartest beer in the resurgent capital, enjoying a chic unmatched by local brews in any other British city.

Deuchair's, a name revived by the local Caledonian Brewery, recalls the days when Edinburgh's beers were so internationally famous as to keep its banks liquid. Even today, Scottish ale's fame lingers in Belgium, France and Italy and is growing in the United States.

Here is Deuchair's again, in the middle of the same stately thoroughfare, at the former Bank of Scotland, a tower of



High Renaissance austerity, built in the 1870s. This bank's porches are iconic, its interior pillars of Peterhead granite, its lavish cornices unattainably lofty. The establishment is now called The Standing Order (62 George Street). Its walls are softened by bookshelves, and it looks more like a particularly grand public library than a pub, but its stock-in-trade is a dozen cask-conditioned ales. Just the place for a literary gathering. I cosied a dry malty, leafy Wild Cat, from Tomintoul, and had a quiet read. Why were the two young women at the next table drinking Irn Bru? Had hangovers, I suppose.

The ale broun that is George Street has enough water to turn it into an alcoholic waterfall, at which point it could no longer look down on second-hand Rose Street. In my youth I weekly and hopelessly tried to have a half in every pub along the hidden shame of this alley,

but Rose Street got Carnabied. There is still, though, the 1902 Abbotford Bar (3 Rose Street), with its Jacobean interior, the island bar in mahogany and the moulded ceiling recently touched up in pale green and gold. Here I first toasted a posher pal confident enough to arrive capped and gowned from his graduation. In those days, we drank Bass; today the Broughton brewery provides a firm, dry, hoppy house 70-shilling ale and guest beers may include Lila Fair ("Stone of Destiny"), a malty, textured, dark ale from the new Inveralmond brewery, in Perth.

Festivals suggest drinking, but culture requires that this be done among the work of great artists and craftsmen. In this, Edinburgh excels. First-time visitors should not miss the 1860 Café Royal (nearly at 17 West Register Street), with Doulton-tiled murals of British inventors in the Circle Bar and

stained-glass depictions of sportsmen in the Oyster Bar. Beers at the moment include Caledonian's nutty, lemon-grassy Festival Ale. A few doors away the 1830s Guildford Arms (1 West Register Street) has friezes, screens and a minstrels' gallery, and, from 13 to 22 August, its own festival of folk music. This pub is one of my great favourites, especially for beers from Harviestoun. Last time I called, they had the aptly named Bitter and Twisted; let's hope stocks last.

Where South Bridge meets High Street, a Royal Bank, built in magnificently classical style, but as recently as the Twenties, was six or seven years ago converted into a bar and small hotel. This has recently been refurbished and renamed Logie Baird's (1-3 South Bridge, corner of Royal Mile). The manager, Stewart Foulis, is from the Orkneys, and features an unusually full selection of assertive Orcadian beers and whiskies. The hotel's rooms are named after Scottish inventors, including Alexander Graham Bell and James Watt.

In the Old Town, between the castle and the Queen's Hall, the stone vaults of Bannermans (212 Cowgate, between Grassmarket and The Pleasance) are a Fringe favourite, with jazz and blues on Sunday evenings. Look out for the flowery Fraoch Heather Ale.

South and west, between The Meadows and Tollcross, The Cloisters is a newish pub in

the 1870s Gothic former parlourage of St Michael and All Saints (26 Brougham Street). In this cosy spot I greatly enjoyed a new beer, a clean, dry, summery, refreshing India Pale Ale called St Leonard's. This was launched in January by Gordon Taylor, a mechanical engineer who worked in the now-defunct Monktonhall colliery, in the Lothians. On becoming jobless, Taylor established a U-Brew

centre (one of those laundromat-looking places where members of the public can make their own beer). He now also uses the equipment to brew for pubs in quarter-barrel batches. Not far from The Cloisters, in theatre country, Bennet's Bar (8 Leven Street, in 1890s "Jacobethan", is an Edinburgh classic: a narrow, arcade-like pub, with tiling, mirrors and "Glasgow-style" stained glass

advertising long-gone brewers. More than 100 single malts here, and the ubiquitous Caledonian IPA.

Just beyond the West End, the Caledonian Sample Room (58 Angle Park Terrace, toward Slateford Road) showcases the beers of the eponymous brewery. The red-painted tongue-and-groove of the walls reflects the agricultural-industrial style of the

nearby Victorian brewery itself. There is a changing selection of five or six beers from Caledonian, along with products from other small breweries.

An impressive 20 hand-pumps can be seen in action after big games at Tynecastle or Murrayfield. Who needs a summer festival to sharpen the thirst, when all winter you can have 22 or 30 men kicking an inflated bladder?



The Caledonian Sample Room showcases the beers of the eponymous brewery

Michael Jackson



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Under the weather

If you're ever unhappy with the weather, blame Valentia, off the coast of Kerry, because that's where it comes from. By Sophie Campbell

It had been raining for days when I arrived on Valentia Island; the sort of steady, insistent downpour that started Noah building the Ark and that puts people off coming to Ireland on holiday. Mauve cumulus clouds sulked on top of the nearby Kerry mainland. My gym shoes squeaked as I left the car and tried to find my B&B on foot. Valentia itself was a hush, dripping smear of green fields, huchsia hedges and peat bogs, under a sky as grey as a habit.

Still, you can't come to the island which apparently inspired Tennyson to pen: "Break, break, break, on your cold stones, o sea" and expect Mediterranean sun. Weather is what Valentia does best - turning up night after night on Radio 4's shipping news, between "Sailing By" and the national anthem, number eight in the clockwise rota of weather stations in the British Isles (and the westernmost by far) with its own stormy contribution of variable pressures and Atlantic fronts. "Valentia is very important," said a Met Office spokesman, "because so much of our weather comes from the west."

Squeaking around the capital of Knightstown in the newly minted weather, wondering how long it took to develop trench foot, I was asked by a man in a car if I was lost. He told me how to get to my B&B and drove off, leaving me apparently alone in the little village. Like so much of south-west Ireland, it makes up for its muted natural palette of greens and greys with wildly extrovert house paint: caravans for the Galley Kitchen Wine Bar, avocado skin for Boston's Pub, banana milkshake for the Islander Restaurant. The Church of Ireland

was hidden in a protective rectangle of trees at the top of the village and facing it at the bottom was the neat little quayside Clock Tower, restored to its former glory as part of the 1980 Tidy Town Scheme.

By now, 10am, the main thoroughfare of Peter Street was beginning to open up, with the utmost reluctance, like an elderly clam. First the sweet shop selling papers and postcards. Then the bar at the Royal Pier Hotel (plain Young's before the Prince of Wales came to visit in 1858). Then the Last Post bric-a-brac shop with its collection of brass portholes and cottage china. I stood on the weighing platform next to the Clock Tower that once weighed in coal and timber from Liverpool and wine and olive oil from Andalucia and weighed out slate, potatoes, oatmeal and the odd bulb.

In the 19th century, the slate yards just across the road would have been a hive of activity. Slates are omnipresent Valentia - there is a quarry that now houses a grotto to Our Lady - and slate used to pour out in the form of tiles, lintels, flags and slabs to roof the Houses of Parliament in London and the Opera House in Paris and to help lay the roads evenly on billiard tables across the world. Imported coal was needed to power the gigantic slate saws and the Valentia Slab Company employed many islanders through the years of famine.

Driving back along the Knightstown Road, it was difficult to imagine that in the last century the school population alone was about 500. Today there are 500 people living on Valentia, working in agriculture, tourism, fishing and radio (there are 14 employees at the medium-range

coast station, built in 1914, that relayed messages during both the sinking of the Lusitania and the 1977 Fastnet disaster). At my B&B, Mrs O'Sullivan ushered me in and went to get the phone. "That was Declan to say, did I know that you were coming on foot?" she said, coming back a minute later

with a cup of tea. Declan? I remembered the man in the car. The bush telegraph was singing already.

Ten minutes away, in the museum in the old National School building, I learnt that Valentia comes from the old Irish word "baileach", or harbour mouth, rather than home-

sick Spanish privateers, and that the local landlords - the Knights of Kerry - had won their title from Henry II after the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in 1167. Most fascinating of all was the laying of the Transatlantic Cable, when, for a while, the eyes of the world were on

White Strand, Ballycarbery, Valentia.

The process - technically astounding for the time - began in 1857, but was fraught with problems. First the cable, made of hemp, tar, linseed oil, gutta-percha and copper wires, had been twisted in opposite directions by American and British manufacturers, so that it would have unravelled when the ships met in the middle. When it did work, a Dr Whitehouse (left in charge, shamefully, at the Valentia end) burnt it out "by excessive use of voltage". In the end, though, the skilled "graphers" - who communicated with their colleagues at Heart's Content, Newfoundland - had the highest paid men on the island and could be seen constantly kneading their fingers to keep them supple.

That evening, a double rainbow appeared like a vision over the Altzarmuth B&B in Knightstown. Inspired, I got up at 7am the next day to walk to the western point of Bray Head, where I could see the Skelligs

Sophie Campbell

islands miles offshore, buried in cloud like two rock cakes in a smoke-filled kitchen. Half-way up, the world fell on my head. Rain bounced of the tussocky grass, off the rough path, off the peat bogs behind me. It poured down my neck, stiffened my jeans, re-soaked my gym shoes.

And as I stood there, with the waves foaming white and green below, thinking about the cable stretching all the way to America, the Skelligs suddenly appeared again, radiant against a background of Virgin Mary blue. Rain swept over me on its way east, dragging behind it a beautiful day. The sun came out. The path glistened like a silver ribbon. On the mainland, patches of green made fleeting appearances, like visions of Arcadia, soon to be obliterated with what I felt was my personal rainstorm. I wondered if I should ring friends in London, warn them what was on the way. But I reckoned they'd probably hear it on the radio first.

FACT FILE

SOPHIE CAMPBELL paid £90 including tax for a return ticket from Stansted to Kerry with Ryanair (0841 5695669) and £8 extra for a return fare on the Stansted Express (£21 without a Ryanair ticket). She rented a Group A car from Holiday Autos (0900 300411), which costs £239 per week in August. An ensuite room at Gleemore Heights B&B, on the Knightstown Road (00 353 667 6241), costs £17 per

night, including Irish breakfast, or £15 for a standard room. The ferry from Knightstown to Reward Point is run by Valentia Island Ferries Ltd (00 353 667 6141) and costs £3 single or £4 return for a car, or £1 single and £2 return for foot passengers. It runs throughout the day from 10am. There is also a road bridge to the mainland at Portmagee, on the other side of the island.

Islands miles offshore, buried in cloud like two rock cakes in a smoke-filled kitchen. Half-way up, the world fell on my head. Rain bounced of the tussocky grass, off the rough path, off the peat bogs behind me. It poured down my neck, stiffened my jeans, re-soaked my gym shoes.

And as I stood there, with the waves foaming white and green below, thinking about the cable stretching all the way to America, the Skelligs suddenly appeared again, radiant against a background of Virgin Mary blue. Rain swept over me on its way east, dragging behind it a beautiful day. The sun came out. The path glistened like a silver ribbon. On the mainland, patches of green made fleeting appearances, like visions of Arcadia, soon to be obliterated with what I felt was my personal rainstorm. I wondered if I should ring friends in London, warn them what was on the way. But I reckoned they'd probably hear it on the radio first.

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Hidden desert marvels

Libya may not be the first choice of destination for holidaymakers, but Jane Cochrane found it a delight

Have you ever been to Jamahiraya? I am baffled by the first question on my green visa application card. So I ring Avril Randell, who is taking me with her to Libya and explain that as far as I know, I haven't, but how can I be sure? After correcting my pronunciation she told me that a "Jamahiraya" is a cross between a Democracy and a Republic, and I had started at page three.

Eventually, after folding and opening the card in a variety of different ways and turning the pages backwards I found the heading in English, "The Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiraya".

In the last two years Avril, whose card calls her a "Battlefield Tour Manager", has taken four groups of Second World War veterans into Libya, over its eastern border with Egypt, to visit the war cemetery in Tobruk and the battlefield sites in the east of the country. Now she is doing the reconnaissance for a trip taking old soldiers and their relatives into Libya, over the western border with Tunisia, to Tripoli and through to Benghazi. I accompanied her, as my father was killed in Libya in 1943.

Before we set out I asked her what I should take and wear. It is quite alright to take a camera, but she advised me to wear a skirt to my ankles or trousers, shirts with long sleeves and a high neck, cotton or linen, and nothing see-through. "And you'll need a sensible nightie with long sleeves, in case a man comes into your hotel room with the room service. Now I must go and clean out the hamster cage. Cheero!"

Avril organises these tours in an entirely voluntary capacity from her kitchen table in Norfolk and fits it in with her family life and farm.

History lessons in Libya start with Gadhafi's coup in 1967; younger

Libyans know nothing of the Second World War. But, like almost every other government in the world, Libya is interested in encouraging some limited tourism and Avril's "cottage industry" is expanding.

Many veterans of the desert war wish to return, but this is not the only reason to go. In spite of discouraging advice from the Foreign Office, I found Libya a delight.

Although always accompanied, we were not restricted in where we went, and nothing was too much trouble for Fatma, the representative from Apollonia Tours.

The war cemeteries in the two main cities, Tripoli and Benghazi, were easy to find and scrupulously cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

We also planned to visit the battlefield at "Beda Fom" near Benghazi, where, in 1940, an army of a quarter of a million Italians surrendered to 30,000 British troops under Wavell. So Fatma found us a bedouin shepherd who knew this remote place named only after a well. He guided us over a desert ridge beyond the end of the Tarmac road and dirt track and there we found the remains of gun emplacements and spent cartridges.

Fatma stopped on the way back to ask a Sudanese camel herd if we could have some fresh camel's milk, but it was the wrong time of day for milking camels.

Often we felt that time stood still, but in other ways Libya seemed very modern. Satellite television dishes are on sale by the roadside and pick up news beamed from the BBC, Damascus and 20 other channels. Although not participants, groups of young men everywhere were watching the World Cup.

The weather was warm and sunny in a Californian kind of way (you get the feeling that it always is), but the swimming pool in our hotel

and the huge Mediterranean beaches were empty. I asked Avril if she ever swam but she said she didn't risk it. On her first try she wore a sarong which once blew back in a gust of wind. Afterwards, a tour guide had whispered in her ear: "I have seen your legs, I will not sleep tonight."

After that she secured the sarong with a safety pin.

The town and city markets were full of both modern clothes and banks of hand-woven cotton and linen for the traditional robes that many Libyan men still wear. One could also buy brightly coloured handwoven striped silk, saffron, jasmine oil, olive oil soap, copper pots and 10ft high copper pinnacles for mosques, not to mention fresh dates and the tastiest honey.

Unlike in neighbouring countries, the locals took no notice of us walking through the souks with our guide. But anyone who cannot bear the thought of a week without alcohol should not even consider going to Libya as it is strictly illegal.

On our 600-mile drive along the desert road between Tripoli and Benghazi, the driver frequently braked hard to avoid sedate camels as they crossed in front of us looking neither to left nor right. In more built-up areas, a roadside feature is

the wild sculptures of twisted metal tubing which turn out to be racks of exhaust pipes for sale. In the towns, we saw similar sculptures of long handled paint rollers.

These belong to immigrant Egyptian workers who also stand with their picks and marble polishing machines to advertise their work.

Huge Libya – the size of France, Germany, Holland and Scandinavia put together – has a population of

under five million and there are as many guest workers as there are indigenous Libyans.

We were proudly shown a reservoir for the man-made river. This is a hugely ambitious scheme, now almost complete, to bring water from the desert town of Kufra, some 1,250 miles away, to the coastal towns and farms for drinking water and irrigation. In a country where bottled water is 10 times more expensive than petrol this will be welcome.

For the tourist, though, the greatest surprise is the collection of Greek and Roman ruins.

Leptis Magna also has a site museum with superb Greek and Roman statues, friezes and funerary urns which, as the custodian showed us, still contain human bones. Outside Leptis, at the end of a long sandy track we had the extraordinary experience of standing in a gigantic and complete Roman arena

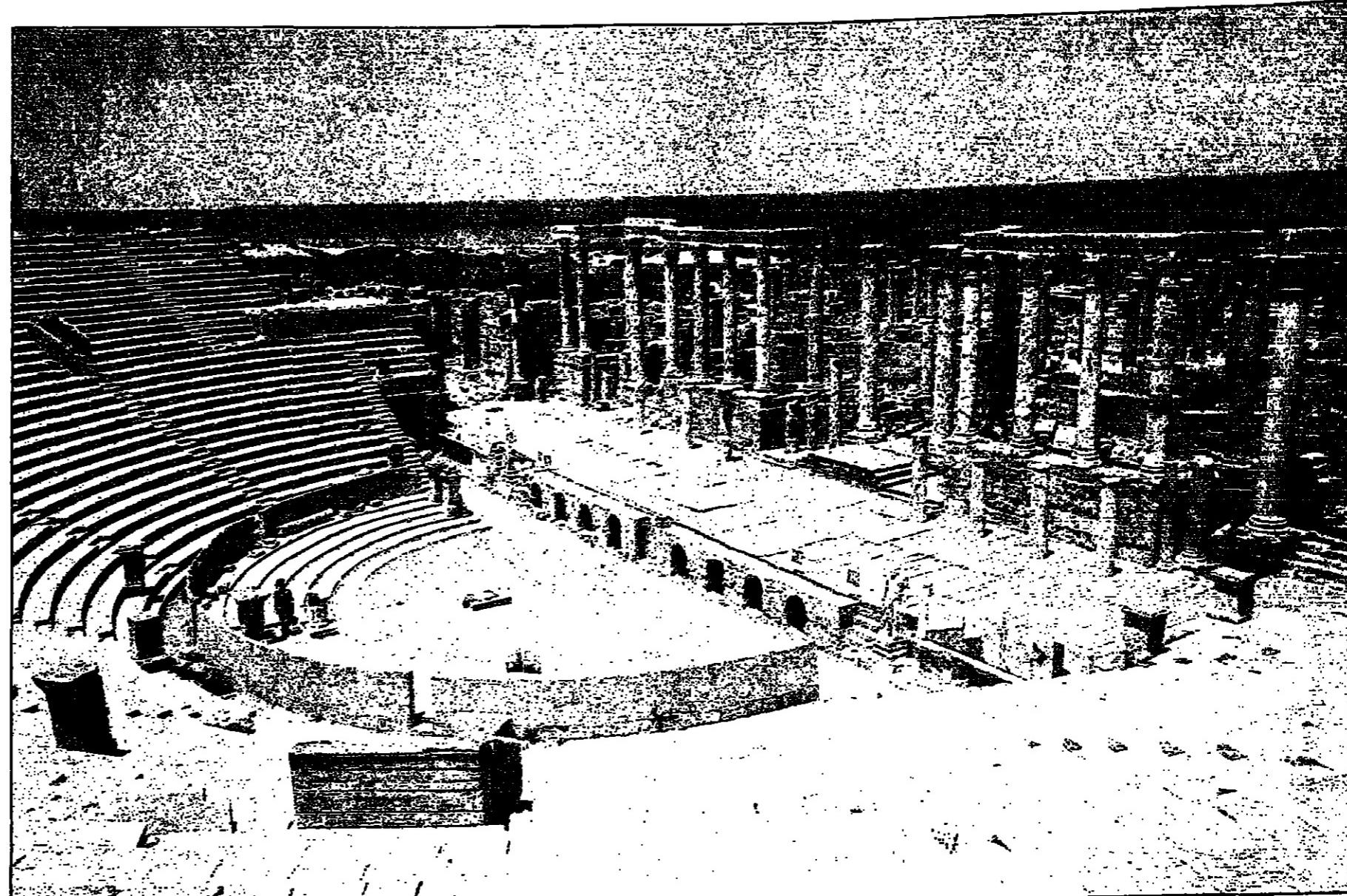
where, in Sabratha the best mosaic floors have been brought to a museum on the site.

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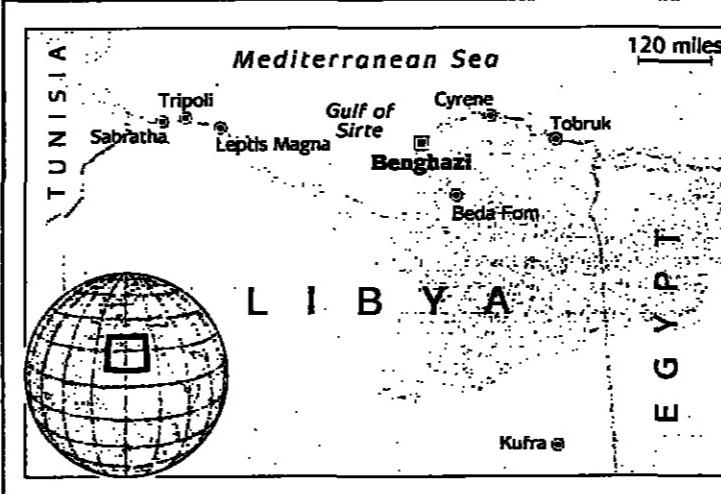
without another tourist for miles.

Stanfords Map and Book Shop (0171-836 1321) is uncertain about when it will next get supplies. Try the Geoprojects 1:3.5m (£7), which Stanfords does have in stock.

The latest Foreign Office travel advice, issued in June, says: "We have no diplomatic relations with Libya and the protection we can offer to British nationals visiting the country is limited. Register with the British Interests Section, Italian Embassy, Tripoli (tel: 3331192/3)."



Jane Cochrane



FACT FILE

JANE COCHRANE'S seven-day trip was arranged through Arab Tours Limited, 60 Marylebone Lane, London W1M 5PF (0171-935 3273).

She paid £1,000 for flights, visa, car, driver, accommodation and all food.

The British Museum Traveller (0171-323 8895) has availability on its tour to Libya early in October.

An excellent map of Libya, at a scale of 1:2m, is produced by the Hungarian company Cartographia. Unfortunately,

Stanfords Map and Book Shop (0171-836 1321) is uncertain about when it will next get supplies. Try the Geoprojects 1:3.5m (£7), which Stanfords does have in stock.

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THAT SUMMER

SPAIN, 1972

Flames of passion in the days of Franco

Liz Nash hitched round Spain with a friend fending off unwanted amorous advances

MY POLITICALLY right-on friends warned me off Spain while Franco remained in power. Endorsing Fascism, they said. I was stung, but took no notice. Sue and I landed in Barcelona at dawn, or dusk. I forgot, and gasped at the flushed Mediterranean sky. I'd never flown before.

"Everyone is smiling and friendly... My ambition re-

alised." I crowded in my first postcard home. How invincible I felt, with my two T-shirts, cotton skirt sewn from a Laura Ashley outfit, white sandals and contraceptive pills. We toted Army surplus backpacks and sleeping bags, but slept rough only once in five weeks. In a municipal wash-house, shooed away at daybreak by women thrashing their laundry

against the granite ridges. I'd saved £50 from a job as a barmaid. Sue, who had a proper job, had £100, which meant she could afford souvenirs.

We had no guidebook, just a map and a pocket dictionary. We knew about Gaudi, though, and sought out his extraordinary buildings, covered in grime. We headed to the dim *barrio chino* (red-light district) for a cheap

meal that launched a lifelong love-affair with Spanish cuisine. Pasta soup, lamb chops, tomato salad, blackbird wine from the jug, sweet fizzy water, egg flan. It became our staple diet, served wordlessly in inns where the choice was minimal.

We hitched to Huete and experienced our first fiesta – buckets of wine and peaches dancing in the street and the fierce sexual directness of boys

thirsty for anything from beyond the Pyrenees, who quizzed us about Jean-Paul Sartre and Led Zeppelin. I fell for an easygoing lad with a Vespa who drove me to his old home, a dark ruin in the heart of town, and his new home, a cramped flat on the outskirts, where his mother laid a crisp embroidered cloth in my honour. I split red wine on it, but she cleared it away still smiling.

I refused to accompany him to the bullfight, which I thought cruel and barbaric, but amazingly managed to find him later in the tipsy torrent that poured from the bullring and we roared into the pine-clad hills. This was boring for Sue, so we moved on, stopping short of our destination if a likely hill-top village came into view around lunch time. We avoided travelling in the afternoons, when drivers became drowsy or amorous.

We were both objects of curiosity with our fair skin, vast hair and sloppy gear so we learnt to deflect unwelcome approaches by being brisk. Spaniards, we concluded, were too dignified to foist themselves upon curvaceous English women.

Predators melted away or be-

came allies after a crisp word and a chummy smile.

Lorries ruled the interminable single-lane highways, and hours rolled by while I tried to converse with drivers sometimes – bravely, I thought – asking what they thought of Franco. One, in the intimacy of his cab, ventured a joke at the Caudillo's expense, about a toad, which escaped me, but I felt honoured by the confidence.

Two brothers took us in a smart car to their home in Madrid, whirled us round the capital by night, then installed us chastely in their absent parents' brocaded matrimonial bed.

Next morning Sue and I found a hostel in a steep lane whose name, Cervantes, sounded promising, so we stayed a few days, bought green olives, honey, olives, sardines, lemons and brandy from shops nearby and trotted down the hill to the Prado to gaze at a single Velazquez, or a Goya.

We dined on pickled anchovies, spicy potatoes, fried squid, and shrimps whose husks we cast to the floor, then rolled home through the gloom and clapped our hands. The sound rang in the shuttered silence, summoning the night-watchman who carried keys to

every house in the street. With deep suspicion, he let us in.

Two philosophy students took us to Salamanca, where we sat in Spain's most beautiful square while the dark one composed, then recited, a poem, and the fair one bent his attention to Sue. But we hadn't come here to be entertained by intellectuals.

Heading south, we smoked and drank with a couple of crop-haired conscripts until a pre-dawn hour, when they hurried for a train to their barracks. Lodgings became rougher. Once I turned on a tap and received an electric shock.

Two gypsies promised to take us to Granada, then explained that they were heading for Montilla to play guitar at a wine-tasting flamenco festival. They said they'd fix us up, say we were cousins. For the first time I felt uneasy, and on arrival asked the man in charge to help. "I mean, it's obvious we're not their cousins, isn't it?" He gave us a room and a ticket for the event, worth a staggering £5 each, a bottle of montilla and a scarlet carnation. Beneath the Andalusian moon we sat up all night to a savagely thrilling flamenco.



"We knew about Gaudi and sought out his buildings"

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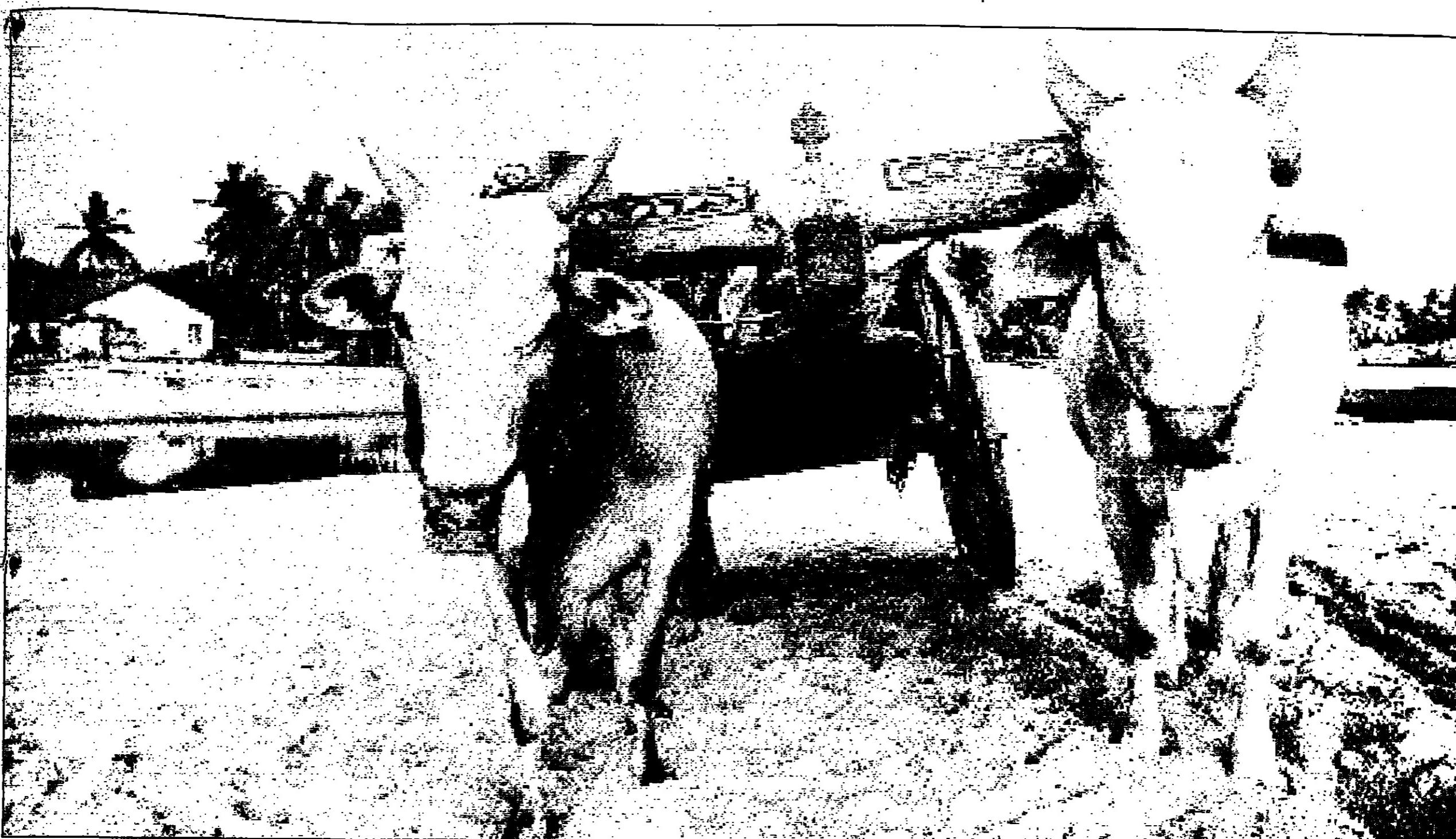
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The moussaka ad



The other tourists don't know what they're missing: a beachside scene, above, and, below right, jungle transport for the jaded

Main photograph: Jenny Quiggin/Colorific!

Serendipity strikes in Sri Lanka

Among the temple flowers and free-roaming cows, Nicola Bray lost her fear of being shot, and learned to love travelling alone

The word "serendipity" – the faculty of making unexpected discoveries by accident – is interwoven in the history of Sri Lanka.

It was therefore, perhaps, not unexpected that as a single female, booking an eight-day guided tour of north Sri Lanka to meet like-minded individuals, I was faced with an ironic quirk of fate: Kuoni told me I was the only one on the tour. I suspect that it would have been easier for everyone if I had cancelled or switched to another holiday, but to its credit the company was prepared to take a solo traveller.

What's wrong with everybody? was my first thought – and one that I loudly imparted to my parents when visiting them that evening. My mother peered at me over her spectacles. "I'm not surprised, dear". Her voice took on the irritating quality of the Beatle character in the BT ads: "The last two times you've been on holiday you've managed to hit on war zones, Israel you got bombed, Egypt you got followed by the secret police". She opened her palm heavenward, and then concluded, with some conviction, that the Tamil Tigers were probably going to finish me off.

A few weeks later I found myself standing in the departure lounge, seeing something that I've not felt in years: a real sense of anticipation and excitement about my holiday. There is something both exhilarating and formidable about traveling by yourself for the first time – there's no one to lean on, no one to pick on and no one to comfort you in hospital when you get shot.

When I landed in Sri Lanka, my first impression of the capital, Colombo, was of rusted corrugated iron, half-finished buildings, bamboo-stick scaffolding, traffic jams and humid heat. Two hours later I arrived at my hotel in Mount Lavinia – a beautiful white colonial-style building with a strange combination of dark and dingy passageways and exquisite, unforgettable views of

the Indian Ocean. I stepped through my balcony window into the warmth of the sun, breathing in the fresh scent of the ocean.

The view was breathtaking. Brilliant blue sky, deep golden sands, dusky bodies playing and plunging in the waves, and the liquid amber swell of the ocean crashing against the rocks below. I lay on my bed later that evening, with the sound of the sea penetrating the closed balcony windows, and drifted off to sleep.

The following day my tour guide, Brian, met me with an air-conditioned car, instead of the usual group mini-bus. As we set off for the first leg of the tour – a five-hour drive north to Anuradhapura – I quizzed Brian about Colombo. En route we passed the World Trade Centre, which had been bombed several months earlier. The impact was evidenced by the hundreds of shattered windows and many hotels that were still only semi-operational. I reached for my camera, but Brian warned me that photographs were forbidden.

After the heat and hustle of the capital, the true beauty of Sri Lanka started to unfold. The country – only 270 miles long by 140 miles wide – has a diverse climate, culture and religious influences, and a colourful history and natural beauty. For me, it was some of the idiosyncrasies of the country that made it so special.

Many local people have belief in the "evil eye" and post human effigies on the roof or in the grounds of their

homes to ward off evil spirits (to fool the spirits into believing that someone is at home).

Village roadsides are decorated with beautiful white ribbons and home-made bunting to signify that somebody in the village has died. Yellow dogs and cows roam freely, relaxing in the roads, and the scent of the beautiful "temple flower" tree, with its dark green leaves and lily-white flowers, pervades the air.

Some homes are colourfully branded with pictures of consumer products – like yellow soapboxes or blue-and-white toothpaste blocks – the painted colours cheerfully clashing with the surrounding peaceful, lush green vegetation.

The rivers are crowded with women washing clothes and stretching them out on the banks to dry in the sun. At the beginning or end of the day, men and women can be found bathing fully clothed, normally in segregated areas, then making the uncomfortable walk home, dripping wet, modesty intact.

As I reach Anuradhapura, the temperature is sweltering. I am amazed at the wealth of historical sites and religious monuments available, and walk with Brian around the sites in my bare feet (shoes and hats must be removed at many religious sites). I quickly develop the art of speedwalking between the shady bits, much to the amusement of my guide, who had leather-soled feet.

Many of the places on the main tourism thoroughfares are in close proximity to each other – including the Bo Tree (a sapling of the original tree where the Buddha gained enlightenment), Gal Potha (the rock book), the Shiva Temple (worshipped by Hindu women seeking blessings for conception – with offerings made to a stone penis) and beautiful dagobas (bell-shaped buildings). However, the place to visit – and one definitely not to be missed – is Sigiriya Palace (also known as Lion Rock) – an impregnable palace built on top of a huge rock, with the only access, originally, through the carved mouth of a lion.

The climb is not for the faint-hearted – you need a head for heights and some stamina – but it is worth it for glimpses of original frescoes, pleasure gardens, mirror wall and palace ruins. The workmanship is truly astounding, and the view will take your breath away (although the climb had already done that for me).

The closer we got to the rebel-held territory, the more military checkpoints there were to be negotiated with the help of special travel permits – but any fears I might have had of being shot by Tamil Tigers were somewhat alleviated by the brilliant array of pot plants and colourful flowers set on top of the paint-patterned oil drums, placed in alternate rows across the road.

Two days later I was finally delivered back to my original hotel, Mount Lavinia. Throughout the tour I had had the opportunity to do many things – an elephant ride in the jungle; and visits to an elephant sanctuary, a batik factory, a mask factory, a spice plantation, a wood-carving workshop and a gem factory. I had also sampled the local cuisine, hoppers (a type of pancake with raised sides, with fried egg at the bottom, eaten with a variety of curry dishes) and had acquired a taste for a spicy breakfast.

Having a guide all to myself meant that I had no time to feel lonely; there was so much to see, do, listen and learn.

I accumulated a wealth of knowledge about Sri Lanka, the people and the language – which would ordinarily have taken me months. This holiday gave me empowerment. I am no longer scared to travel by myself or to hire my own guide for trips abroad. It's an exciting world out there, and one that I now have the courage to discover.

Nicola Bray paid £1,118 for a two-week holiday in Sri Lanka with Kuoni, booked through Thomas Cook. The price included all travel, accommodation, most meals and a side-trip to the Maldives.



A train
"The most outlandish train in Europe" is an uncharacteristic piece of editorial by the compilers of the *Thomas Cook European Timetable*. Every Saturday at 5.15pm, the Saratov sets off from Berlin to travel 8,450 miles east to Novosibirsk – exactly the same distance as from London to New York. It first calls at Warsaw, but then bypasses almost everywhere of interest during its five-day journey to link up with the Trans-Siberian railway. Both ends of the line, but thankfully not the train itself, will appear in the new look travel pages of *The Independent* next Saturday.

A plane
Next month, Britain gets reconnected with Colorado. Continental Airlines dropped its Gatwick-Denver service a few years back, but British Airways (0345 222111) is now stepping in with a daily Boeing 777 from 1 September. To launch the service, BA is selling a World Offer return of £299.

A room
A cottage in a World Heritage Site costs £300 or £400 for a week this summer, and as little as £175 in the autumn. The Waterhouses at New Lanark are converted cotton-workers' cottages, on the bank of

the Clyde river south-east of Glasgow. Because this is the first season that the properties have been up for grabs, availability is good, even in August; call 01555 667200.

A meal
Chile is a tasty sort of place, according to the new edition of *Wanderlust* magazine (£2.80 from newsagents and travel bookshops, or on subscription from 01763 620426). Chileans traditionally have four meal-times a day: breakfast around eight, lunch around two, *onces* around five and evening meal around 9-10pm. *Onces* is more of a mid-afternoon snack... literally meaning

'elevenes', the term supposedly derives from the 11 letters of the spirit *aguardiente* and was workers' code for 'drink break'. The magazine also launches a travel-writing competition, to be judged by Bill Bryson, with the prize of an assignment to Chile.



A drink
"Wimbledon has an interesting Temperance history," says David Harrison, whose evening tour of the Pubs and Ghosts of Wimbledon Village has been extended by popular demand through August and into September.

The non-Temperance tours of London SW19 take place each Tuesday, starting at the Dog and Fox at 7.30pm and lasting about two hours.

The cost is £2, and the final tour of the year is on 8 September. Call 0181-946 3219 for more details.

A week from now...
... the annual Elvis Presley memorial event reaches its climax

in Memphis, Tennessee. The singer died 21 years ago at his home in the city.

Despite heavy bookings across the Atlantic, the flight consolidator Bon Voyage (01703 330332) has seats available to the city on Delta via Cincinnati for £598 return.

A year from now...
... Cornwall could be in the middle of its busiest weekend ever, in the build-up to the last total eclipse of the Millennium, which sweeps across the south-west of the county on 11 August 1999.

The best source of information is the Royal Greenwich Observatory's Guide to the 1999 Total Eclipse

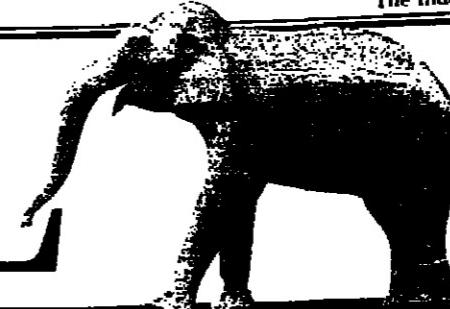
of the Sun (available from Tor Mark, 01209 822101, £5.99 plus £1 postage). The book includes a Mylar eclipse viewer.

Roads in the county could be choked at the time of the event, so the railways are likely to provide the most sensible alternative. Unfortunately, Great Western Trains is refusing to take bookings this far in advance. But Explorers Tours (01753 681999) is already selling seats on chartered trains from Preston, Manchester, Birmingham, Coventry, London, Reading and Bristol, so you can reserve your place out of the sun. They will travel overnight to Penzance, and return in late afternoon. Fares are between £55 and £65.

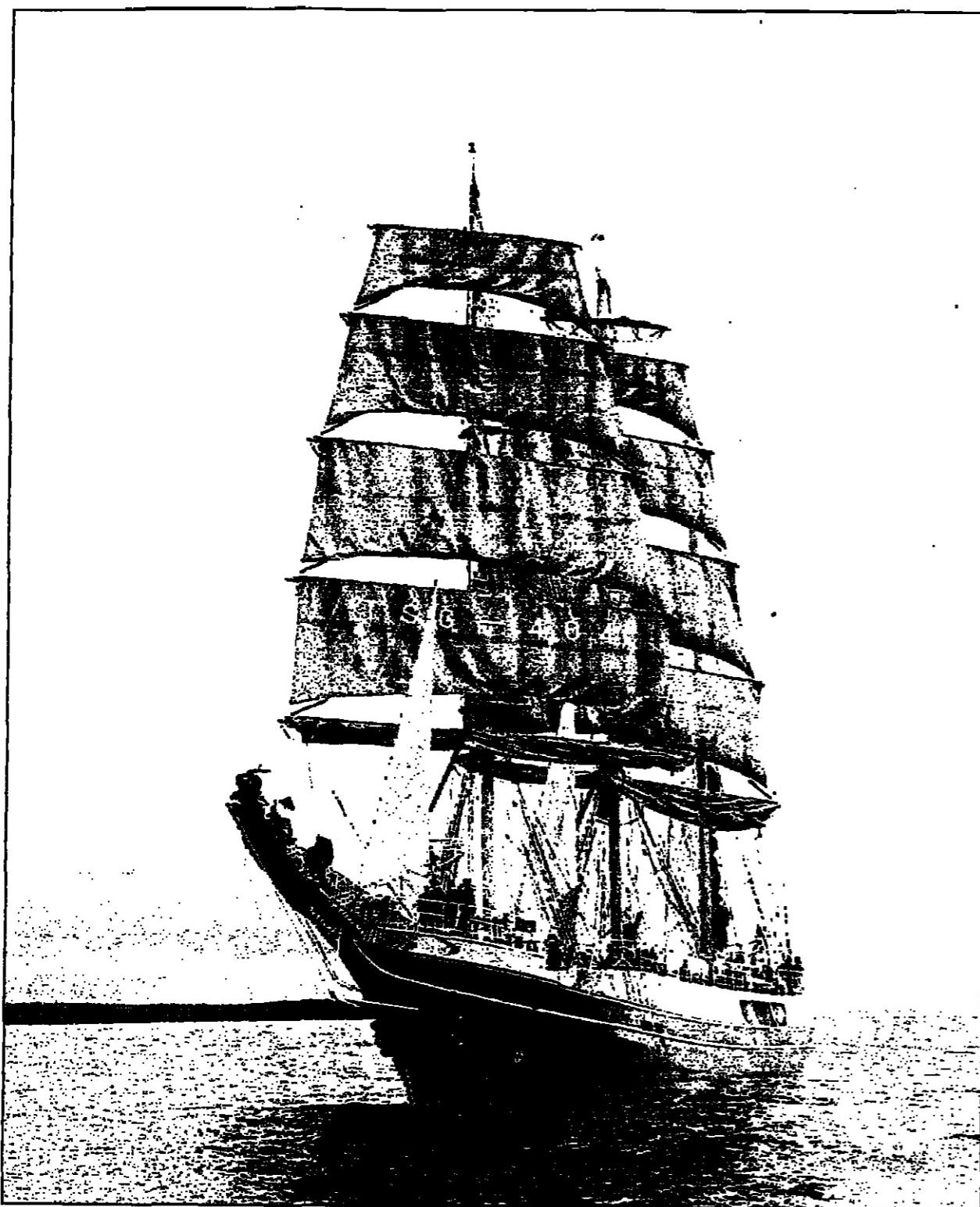




TRAVEL



LIBYA OPENS UP P26 | ON THE ROAD IN FRANCO'S SPAIN P26 | ALONE IN SRI LANKA P27



All at sea, whether calm and collected, above, or bowing through Biscay, below right

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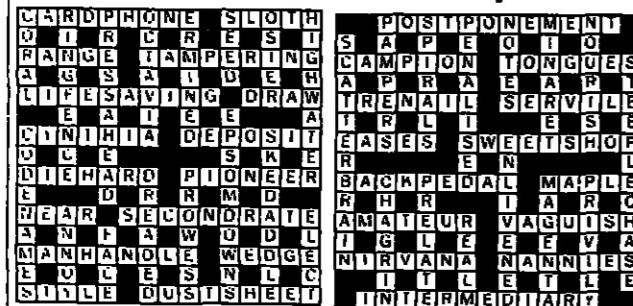
By Sparus

ACROSS

- Start of mission from Zagreb, last of five (5-3)
- Public address system initially being fitted around official building (6)
- Crash study programme? (9-6)
- Country house? (7)
- Salesman's spiel standing in front of new model (7)
- Withdrawal of help before race leads to bitter baranguie (8)
- Infatuation with a Turkish officer (5)
- For protection, say, one needs old-fashioned copper to come round (5)
- Elaborate hat completed in six days? (8)
- Flowers seen in front of country railway station in France, mostly (7)
- Broken-down train that's not moving? (7)
- Aiming to meet cardinals in educational establishment (8, 7)
- Artist sailor in debt? (6)
- Student is cheeky to Fellow (8)

Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. And the winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to: Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 100, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the best name and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: J Davies, Larne; P Comish, Leeds; D Hart, Tadley; J Hamster, Malvern; R Thompson, Harold Wood.

TODAY'S TELEVISION APPEARS IN THE SEPARATE LISTINGS GUIDE

DOWN

- Sponsor's taxi turning up ahead of royal couple? (6)
- Fluent and glib about bits half ignored in impromptu speech-making? (2-7)
- Co-ordinates victory in replayed match (7)
- Children accepting artificial intelligence as being supernatural? (5)
- Old pot for new chimney here? (7)
- Start to cram in food? That's stuffing (5)
- Local uprising in Elba, one unlikely to be repeated at regular intervals? (8)
- Swimsuit worn by English bird formerly? (3-5)
- Occurrence in hospital department probed by detectives (8)
- Ephemeral abbreviation? (5-4)
- Carnage initially extinguished merriment (8)
- Key Spanish king used to imprison English queen (7)
- Structure from Late Latin encountered in critical rest (7)
- Shiny material observed swathing Cockney's headgear (6)
- Indirect response to laws supporting religious education (5)
- Suffer pain, cured after clothing is removed (5)

There were 14 permanent crew - Dutch,

One of the crew caught a tuna, which was eaten for lunch.

I asked the captain, "When is a ship a tall ship?" "When it thinks it is," was his reply. We hit a heavy Biscay swell, huge bulky waves that knocked the ship about, and a force 10 wind. Three of the sails were badly torn and a cable snapped. Crockery zoomed across the saloon and smashed against the side of the ship.

Several ships retired from the race with damaged rigging. There followed days of drowsy languor punctuated by furious activity. Members of the permanent crew whizzed up and down the masts in a bosun's chair with gluepots and sail patches.

There was a serious outbreak of jokes. We sighted land - the mountains of northern Spain - and rounded Cape Finisterre. Two of the crew polished the brass casing of the old binnacle, made by Lillie & Gillie of South Shields. I went up the rope ladder to the first platform (about 20 metres), my hands shaky for about half an hour afterwards.

As we sailed off Falmouth, watched impassively by the monolithic QE2 - on her first visit to the Cornish port - there was not a fluttering handkerchief from the dock in sight; instead it was mobiles a-shay!

Then life at sea began.

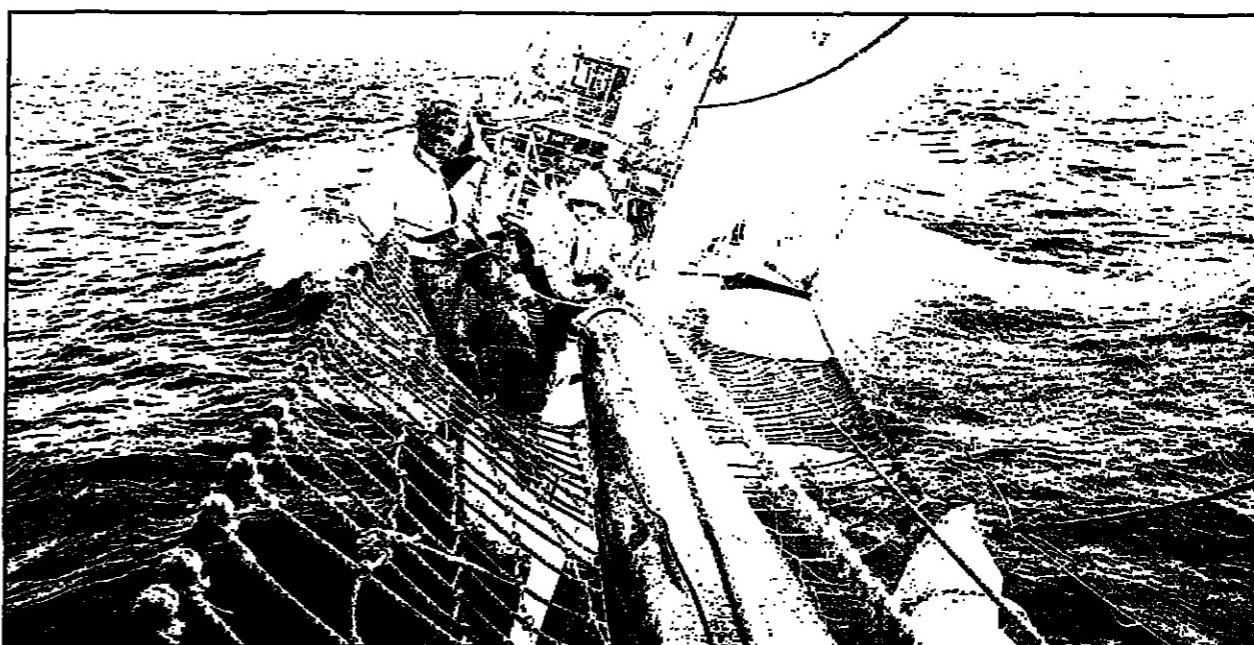
Work could involve rope-pulling, deck-scrubbing, washing-up and rope-cleaning. I learned several important skills - walking at acute angles, wedging and clinging. My cabin under the foredeck often tipped several feet under the Atlantic, and it took me three days to adjust to sleeping with my feet often higher than my head.

When the ship was heeled over, the only way to get into the top bunk was to walk up the side of the fixed cupboard. Rolling off could be avoided by wedging yourself in with your lifejacket. If the ship tacked the other way, you ended up sleeping on the ship's side. I began to walk with a lurch which involved little crab movements as we rocked and rolled south of the Scillies. Several people kept to their cabins.

The ship groaned, belched, sighed and whistled on its way. A homing pigeon with a blue anklelet hitched a lift. As we entered the Bay of Biscay we were buzzed by dolphins, and whales spouted in the distance. We began to shed layers of clothes.

Although we were the third of the Class

A ships to cross the line, a complicated handicap system is used to determine overall winners because of the disparity in the ships' sizes. I think we ended up 24th, but by then no one cared much.



FACT FILE

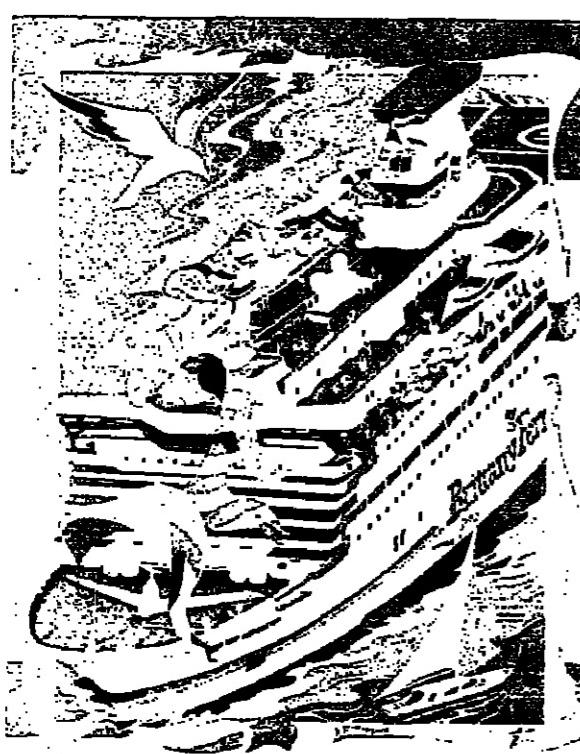
THE TALL SHIPS will leave Vigo, northern Spain, on 12 August, and arrive in Dublin on the weekend of 22-23 August. Next year's race starts from St Malo on 23 July and finishes on 18 August at Aalborg, Denmark, sailing via Greenock and Lerwick.

For race information call the International Sail Training Association (ISTA) on 01705-586367, e-mail: raceoffice@ista.co.uk

£779 plus fare home, but most of them had obtained sponsorship.

For information about sail training, sponsorship, bursaries, etc, contact the Association of Sea Training Organisations (ASTO) through the Royal Yachting Association on 01703-627400; e-mail: training@rya.org.uk

The ship Lord Nelson is specially adapted for crew with physical disabilities.



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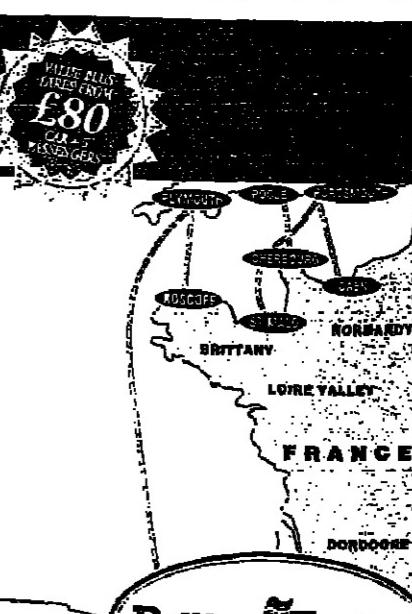
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Electricity sales at the checkout

A 10-month campaign starts next month to open up the power market, but consumers will need to be wary, Paul Slade reports

As if the idea of banking where you buy your groceries isn't bizarre enough, you will soon be able to buy your electricity from the company that insures your car, Paul Slade discovered.

Next month sees the start of a 10-month campaign to introduce competition into the electricity supply industry. Customers in Canterbury, Margate and Dover will be among the first targets.

Insurance companies, banks and supermarkets have already decided they want a piece of the action, and hope to act as agents, selling power on behalf of the electricity suppliers.

In a report published this week by accountants PricewaterhouseCoopers, half of the big financial services companies and retailers questioned said they might start selling electricity, with 22 per cent saying they planned to join the new market soon. One big financial services player said it wants one million electricity customers within four years.

Murray MacFarlane, the PwC partner responsible for the report, says: "A typical insurance company may be good at making insurance, but if they haven't got good customer access, they're cut off at the knees. Therefore, they are looking for any mechanism that establishes them with a customer contact."

"In principle, I can imagine a Commercial Union or a NatWest Bank saying 'Why don't you buy your electricity through us? If you're a current customer, we'll give you a special deal'."

If the sales techniques used by other agents in last year's gas competition campaign are any indication, customers will need to be wary.

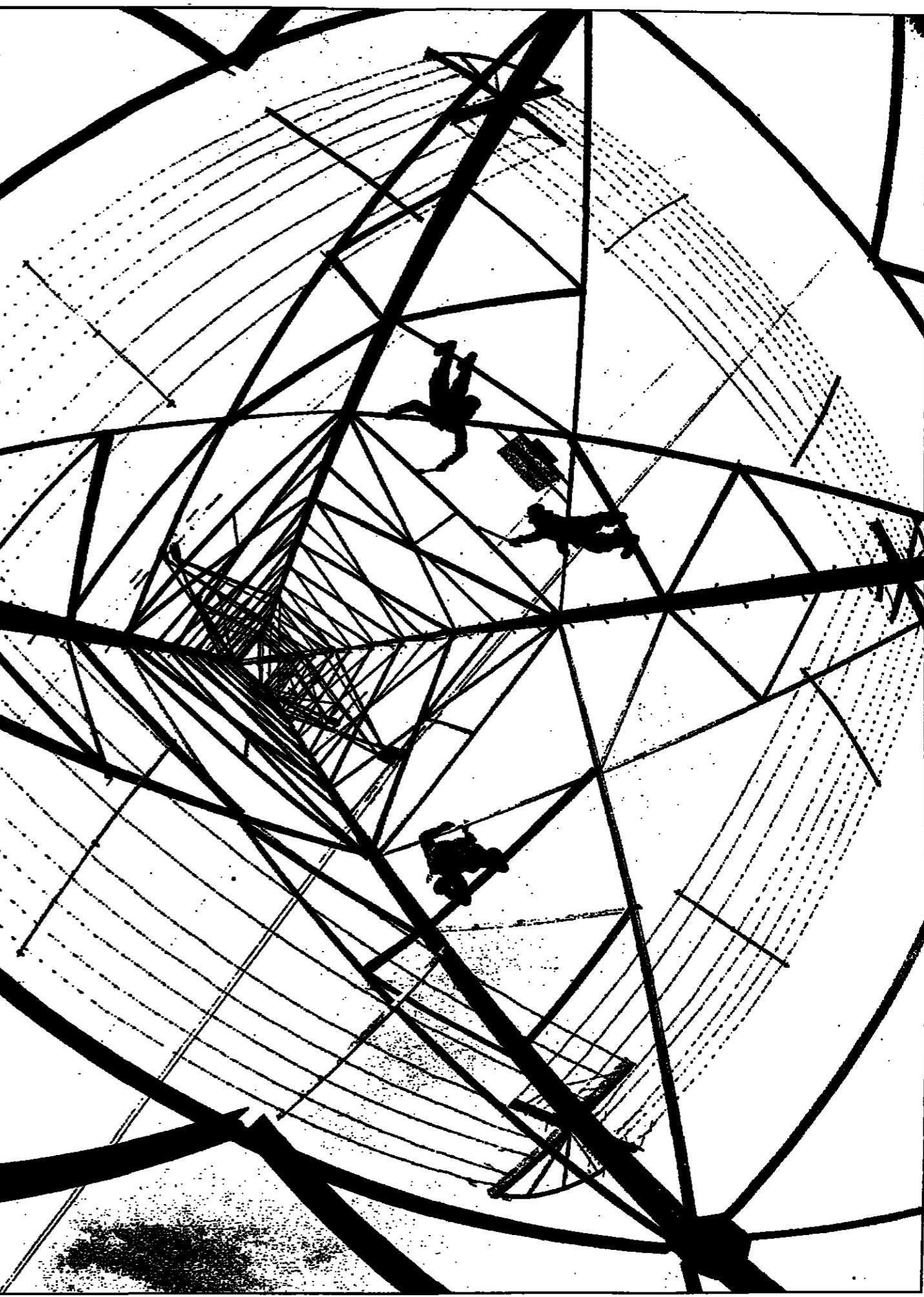
Ian Bickley, spokesman for the Office of Electricity Regulation (Offer), says: "With gas, it was reported that people were asked to sign a form which said that someone had visited them and spoken to them. What they didn't realise was that they were actually signing a contract to take a supply from that company."

The rolling campaign to introduce competition will continue until June next year, by which time every domestic electricity user in the UK should have a choice of suppliers.

Before considering a new supplier, Offer says you should get certain answers from the electricity salesman:

- 1 Does your company charge different rates for different times of the day? This could be important for those on Economy 7.
- 2 What payment options do you have?
- 3 Will I have to pay my bills weekly, monthly, or quarterly?
- 4 Does your contract run for a fixed term? If so, how long will it last?
- 5 How often will my meter be read?
- 6 What happens if I fall behind in paying my bills? What will your company do to help me catch up again?
- 7 To whom do I speak if I have a query or a complaint?
- 8 Does your company offer additional services such as energy efficiency schemes?

As with gas, the incentive produced for customers tempted to



Pylons rise in power across the countryside, multiplying like the number of outlets that will soon be selling domestic electricity

INSIDE

Financial makeover
First edition fortunes
Brian Tora

2 Your rights as an employee
3 Mortgages for Singletons
4 Motoring

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7 Buy before you see
8 Suburban style

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3 PAGES OF
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JULY 1998

A growing number of collectors are focusing on first editions of famous writers. An early copy with its dust-jacket may be worth a lot, as John Andrew discovers

Although in most peoples' minds the phrase "first edition" conjures up an image of a leather-bound volume of some age, modern books can be worth a small fortune and they certainly do not have to be bound in leather.

However, do not build up your hopes, as not every first printing or special edition is valuable. Nicholas Worsley of Christie's South Kensington told me recently: "Authors can go out of fashion." Only that morning he had disappointed a gentleman with a collection of superb leather-bound limited editions by Somerset Maugham, signed by the author. As no one is interested in Maugham's books at present, he could not accept them for auction as he knew they would not sell.

Somerset Maugham and limited printings to one side, first editions by famous writers of the 20th century are generally keenly sought by a growing following of collectors. Novels normally have a broader appeal than poets. Agatha Christie, William Golding, Graham Greene, TS Eliot, Ian Fleming, James Joyce, Evelyn Waugh, Virginia Woolf and PG Wodehouse are among the writers currently at a peak of popularity. Others are joining their ranks. Victoria Lynn of Christie's was recently very surprised when 13 presentation volumes by Dennis Wheatley, which had frayed wrappers and were generally not in good condition, sold for £362.

The greatest demand is for established authors, or the leading figures in a particular genre of fiction - such as crime - but interesting minor writers are not to be overlooked. The interest for collectors is that reputations change and authors currently regarded as minor may become part of the canon of popular literature. This is to the benefit of anyone who has been enthusiastically collecting their first editions.

Generally the first editions of earlier works are worth more than later books by the same author. The reason is simple. When a writer is an "unknown" his or her work is printed in small numbers. As an author secures a reputation, publishers are prepared to undertake larger print runs and therefore first editions of a new work are more abundant.

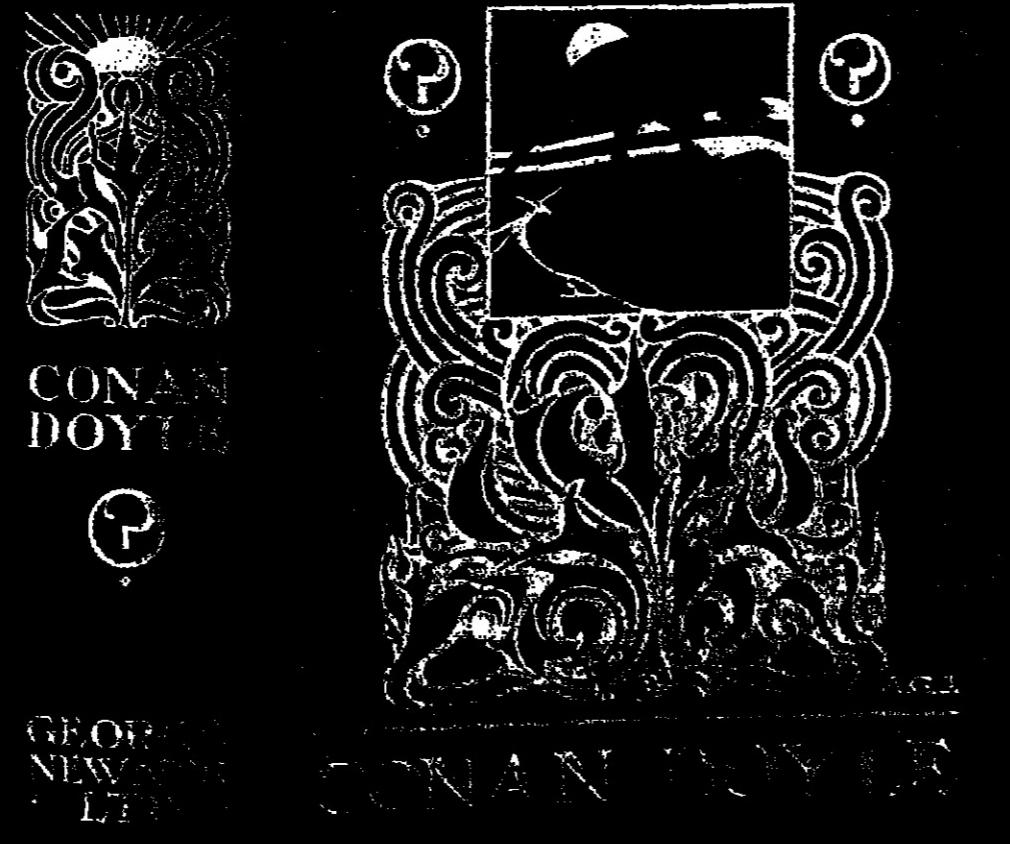
This can be illustrated by Graham Greene's first publicised work, *Bombing April*, a book of poems printed in 1925 when he was an undergraduate. A good copy would now realise £3,000-£5,000 at auction. However, first editions of his post-war books may be secured for under £100. Martin Amis's first book of *The Rachel Papers*, which was published in the 1970s, would realise around £200 if in top condition. However, as his subsequent books are printed in such huge numbers, a first edition has no commercial value as a collectors' piece - of course they have the nominal value as a second-hand book.

Condition is of paramount importance where modern first editions are concerned. Collectors seek examples in pristine condition and it is difficult to obtain a decent price for a volume that is in mediocre condition - unless, of course, it is extremely rare. The presence of an original dust-jacket considerably enhances a book's value. For example, in May Christie's sold a first printing of DH Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, published in 1915. Most of the 2,500 copies were destroyed following the work being held as "not morally sound". In its original dust-jacket, it sold for £5,175 - without, it would have realised £300-£500.

The presence of a dust-jacket caused incredible demand for one 20th century first edition at Sothe-

Your first fortune

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES



This edition sold to a US collector for the incredible amount of £80,700. The only other copy is in the Bodleian

As an original dust-jacket can dramatically lift a book's value, it makes sense to be careful with those on the books you already have

by's last month. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* published in 1902 sold to a US collector for a staggering £80,700, which is a record for a modern first edition with its dust-jacket. The only other known copy with its original wrapper is the Bodleian at Oxford. Had a copy been sold without its dust-jacket, it would have realised £2,000-£3,000.

An original dust-jacket can dramatically multiply a book's value, it makes sound sense to be careful with those on the books you already have and to treat those of the first editions of minor authors which you buy new with the greatest respect. The reason that dust-jackets considerably enhance the value of older

books - to the extent that they are worth more than the book itself - is that at one stage it was unfashionable to retain a book's jacket. Some are also rarer than others because of the delicate or fragile paper used. For this reason, dust-jackets to Ronald Firbank's novels and Beatrix Potter's stories are either unknown or excessively rare.

The condition of the dust-jacket is also very important. Minor tears are not welcome, but may be accepted by collectors. Even so, the slightest of imperfections can decrease values by 10 per cent or more. Badly worn jackets are completely discounted and such books are valued at the same price as a "naked" edition.

Children's books can also be worth a fortune. The highest price for a 20th century first edition in this category is £53,250, achieved at Sotheby's in May 1994 for a volume of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. The copy was given by the author to Zipporah Robinson, a member of the domestic staff at her grandfather's Hertfordshire home. It carries the inscription, "For Zipporah from Beatrix Potter Christmas 1901". It is one of 250 copies Miss Potter had printed herself after the story was rejected by several publishers, including Frederick Warne who published subsequent editions of this and her other stories. In November, Sotheby's is to offer a fine first edition of *Wind In The Willows* in its original dust-jacket. It is estimated at £10,000-£15,000.

Inscriptions can greatly enhance a book's value. A first edition of *Costo-royale* dedicated to "M" and signed by Ian Fleming sold at auction in 1989 for £5,500. The volume was contained in a morocco leather slip case, but otherwise if did not differ from any other first edition of the work. A copy of *Live And Let Die* inscribed to "Clemmy from Winston" has sold for nearly £6,000, whereas a first edition without any inscription, but in its original dust-jacket, would sell for less than £100.

With certain authors their signature on the fly-leaf can quadruple the value of a first edition. However, generalisations can be misleading. Such a premium would not be forthcoming if the author signed a high proportion of his or her work. The recent popularity of book-signings, linked to the fact that the print runs of the book are high, means that it is unlikely in the foreseeable future that current popular works signed by their authors will be of commercial value on the secondary market.

First editions can cost as much as a Rolls Royce, or as little as a train fare. Collecting them is fun because items are available to suit all pockets. So, how does one go about collecting modern first editions? First it is necessary to decide which authors to collect. There is little point in acquiring books which do not appeal to you. When you have drawn up a short list of your favourite writers, go to your local library and obtain a bibliography of each author. This will list every work he or she has published, together with the date of each edition. Alternatively obtain a copy of Conolly's Modern First Editions which is published by Little Brown at £25. This gives a chronological listing of each author's novel, together with an indication of values.

Some larger libraries have volumes of the Book Auction Records which are published annually. These will not only give an indication of the prices at which particular titles sell, but also serve as a useful guide as to the frequency at which certain books appear at auction. It is well worthwhile obtaining a copy of the monthly Book and Magazine Collector and to attend auction views. It is far better to treat all collecting as a hobby. If the volumes you secure do increase in value, that is an added bonus to the pleasure you derive from searching for and owning books.

Demonstrating why Eagle Star Direct expects more business on the Internet, the company is offering anybody purchasing their home and contents insurance from the site a 10 per cent reduction in its standard premiums. A further discount of up to 10 per cent is on offer if your home passes certain security criteria. Full details of these are available on the site.

However, Eagle Star Direct was not the first to offer household insurance over the Internet. Earlier this year, Woolwich Insurance Services unveiled an online market search, select and buying system.

The service provides real-time comparative household insurance quotations,

as well as allowing you to buy a suitable policy on the spot.

Direct route for your insurance

FIRST DIRECT believes there will be an explosion in our use of computers to manage our money over the next decade. According to Mori research conducted for the bank within 10 years more than a third of all current account holders in the UK, nearly 12 million people, expect to use the Internet or similar technology to arrange their finances.

To put that forecast in perspective, fewer than one per cent do so at the moment. The survey also showed that 13 per cent of current account holders already have access to the Internet, up from 5 per cent in 1996. First Direct's own PC Banking service does not operate over the Internet but instead uses its own private network.

Separately, Eagle Star Direct reckons that sales of "cyber insurance" - insurance cover bought over the Internet - will increase by 260 per cent over the next 18 months. This sounds far too exact a forecast to be taken seriously. However, it has to be said that, with the number of Internet connections steadily rising, Eagle Star Direct is surely correct in assuming some significant increase in such business.

It is on this basis that the company has extended the range of insurance it offers on the World Wide Web to include home and contents cover, adding to its existing motor and travel insurance websites. In fact, Eagle Star Direct's motor insurance site has received more than 100,000 requests for quotations in its first 10 months.

As with the other sites, you may purchase home and contents cover directly and immediately, 24 hours a day, through payment by credit or debit card, completing the online application form. The site is interactive, allowing you to select your own preferred level of cover.

Providing you are satisfied with their internet quotation, the policy can be arranged by paying for the initial premium through an online credit card transaction.

If, however, you need personal assistance before you make your choice,

there is an option to be connected to a trained advisor to assist you during the course of the search and transaction process.

Buying insurance direct over the Internet offers clear benefits to you as a consumer. Fewer forms

need to be filled in by hand and rekeyed by data entry

branches.

There is, of course, a concomitant downside to this. If there is a mistake in your policy details, you cannot blame anyone else!

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Sideline cash to cushion setback

THE ONLY surprising aspect of this week's dip in share prices has been that it did not happen sooner.

Markets had actually been trending down on both sides of the Atlantic for a little while. A correction of near 10 per cent had been achieved by the middle of the week - hardly the sort of move of which dives from the 52nd floor of a broker's office are made, but significant nonetheless.

It was all achieved with little fuss. The serious evidence -

profit warnings, analysts' downgrades, and so forth, were already known. So what actually made the difference?

It was a respected market commentator who called the turn. Ralph Acampora, equity strategist at Prudential Securities and a noted bull, forecast an "interruption to the bull markets" - and that was enough. For one day at least.

The pressures in financial markets have been really quite remarkable. On the one hand nobody denies that valuation



BRIAN
TORA

levels are extended. The so-called "Goldilocks" economic situation in the US (neither too hot, nor too cold) has led to sustained growth without overheating.

If this is enough to justify some rather more extravagant price levels than those hitherto acceptable. But when you put this against a background of lower inflation and low bond yields, it is no wonder that people are prepared to pay more for equities. This situation is only exacerbated when supply is restricted by share buybacks and takeovers.

The most important single factor behind this sustained bull market, though, has been the build-up of cash. Money in the mutual fund industry in the US now exceeds that in the banking system.

At present there is sufficient money sitting on the side-lines here and in the US to ensure that any setback is met by a healthy wave of buying, as those who raised money too early or delayed committing cash flow while the market continued to rise seek to make their positions look better. We really do have to decide soon what the right price to pay for financial assets should be.

Nothing has happened yet to suggest that the system will break down, but there are potential happenings that are not beyond the scope of our imagination, and which could ensure investors run for cover. This government, needing to expand its borrowing requirements, is but one, although in the end we all really want to be the Japanese.

Asians may have less money to spend, but they were only ever an important influence at the periphery of more esoteric markets, like high-value central London property, for example. Indeed the problems in the Pacific Rim have, if anything, driven money into the supposedly safer havens of Europe and North America.

Just for the present I think it is worth waiting to see whether we really have seen the end of the current tremors, or whether the bad news that will surely continue, will translate into a share buyers' strike.

Brian Tora is the Chairman of the Greig Middleton Investment Strategy Committee

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Croydon BS	0345 662522	0.95% to 30.9.93	95%	£255
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES				
Scarborough BS	0890 133140	1.50% for 1 year	95%	£255
Principality BS	0800 163817	4.5% to 11.10.93	95%	£255
Croydon BS	0345 662522	0.95% to 30.9.93	95%	£255
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First Mortgage	0800 060008	5.5% to 31.01.94	95%	£255
Scarborough BS	0890 133140	4.15% for 5 years	95%	£255
FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES				
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First Mortgage	0800 060008	5.55% incl. 0.01	95%	£255
Scarborough BS	0890 133140	4.05% for 5 years	95%	£255
UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS				
Telephone	APR %	First monthly payments on £5k over 3 yrs		
UNSECURED				
Northern Rock	0845 421421	9.5% H	£163.14	£163.50
Direct Line	0181 680 9966	12.5%	£163.75	£165.38
Standard & Poor's	0800 121121	12.0%	£165.15	£165.38
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Telephone	APR	Max LTV Advance	Term	
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240204	0.7%	Max £15K	6 months to 25 years
Cheltenham Trust	01222 386000	0.9%	£20K to £25K	1 year to 7 years
Royal Bank of Scotland	0800 121121	11.25%	£2.5K to £10K	3 years to lifetime
OVERDRAFTS				
Telephone	Account	Authorised	Unauthorised	
Alliance & Leicester	0800 555555	0.95%	12.0%	29.0%
Bank of Scotland Direct	0800 040404	Direct charges	-	25.5%
Nationwide BS	0800 320210	Plumecard	11.0%	26.3%
CREDIT CARDS				
Telephone	Card Type	Rate %	APR %	Annual Int. from late fee per card income
Capital One Bank	0800 669000	Visa	0.565% to 6.50%	NB 54 days
RBS Adverts	0800 077700	Visa	0.541% to 7.50%	NB 56 days
Nationwide BS	0800 320211	Visa	0.595% to 5.50%	NB 52 days
GOLD CARDS				
Capital One Bank	0800 669000	Visa	0.565% to 5.50%	NB 54 days £20K
Co-operative Bank	0345 212212	Base Rate Visa	0.63%	12.25% £120 46 days £20K
RBS Adverts	0800 077700	Visa	0.545% to 7.50%	NB 56 days £20K
STONE CARDS				
Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods		
	% PM	% APR	% PM	APR
John Lewis	Visa stone	1.25%	18.0%	1.35%
HSBC	Visa stone	1.25%	26.0%	2.15%
Marks & Spencer	VISA 601601	1.25%	26.3%	2.07%
A Minimum age 21 yrs. Holders of comprehensive motor insurance policy or lender's existing customers APR - Annual percentage rate ASB - Annual service charge B+C - Buildings and contents insurance H - Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged IVU - Loan to value MP - Mortgage indemnity premium N - Introductory rate for a limited period U - Unemployment insurance				
<small>* If compilation is before 30.4.98 All rates subject to change without notice. Source: MONEYFACTS 01603 476476</small>				
<small>Source: MONEYFACTS 01603 476476 6 August 1998</small>				

BEST SAVINGS RATES

Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
INSTANT ACCESS </td					

Working to unwritten rules

Just because you do not have a contract does not mean you are stripped of all rights as an employee. By Ian Hunter

Does the lack of a written contract of employment mean that an employee's only security is the quality of his or her last piece of work? You could be forgiven for thinking that this was the case. In fact the reality can be somewhat different.

Every employee - whether he or she works part-time or full-time, for a fixed period or in a job-share arrangement - has certain rights. And these rights exist regardless of whether the employee has a piece of paper to prove it.

The absence of a written contract does not mean that there is no contractual relationship. Employers and employees still have certain implied legal rights and obligations.

The employer's obligations include the following: the duty to pay salary; to provide a safe workplace; and to act reasonably. The employee has corresponding duties, which include such things as honesty, competence and loyalty.

Employees have additional rights that are guaranteed by legislation - one of the most important is that most employees have the right to statutory sick pay. Female employees, moreover, have varying maternity rights that depend on their length of service. Employees are also protected against unlawful deductions from salary, as well as discrimination on the grounds of race, sex and disability.

Employees do, by law, have a right to receive a statement that sets out the main terms of their employment within two months of starting work. This statement must include such details such as rates of pay, place of work, job title and holiday pay. There is one major problem with this, however - an employee is not subject to any financial sanction for failing to comply.

The extent of financial protection afforded to employees on instant dismissal is in large part dictated by the length of notice period to which they are entitled. The lack of a written contract does not mean all is lost for the employee, however - in some cases far from it.

There is legislation that provides every employee with the right to a minimum notice period regardless of whether or not they have a written contract. This legislation provides that, until the completion of two



Unlike galley slaves, employees have rights laid down in law, even if there is no written contract of employment. Managers could find the law makes dismissal quite expensive

years' service, employees are entitled to one week's notice; thereafter they are entitled to one week's notice for each completed year of employment - up to a maximum of 12 weeks.

However, employees who do not have a written contract can, as an alternative, argue that they are entitled to "reasonable notice". This notice period is determined by such factors as the industry norm for someone of their status. For example, a solicitor might be able to argue for a three-month notice period, while the chairman of a company that is traded on the stock

exchange may be able to establish a case for a two-year notice period.

The length of the notice period is important, because the starting point for calculating damages is a sum equal to the net salary and value of fringe benefits (such as pension contributions or the use of a car) that the employee would have received during the notice period. The employees are under a duty to attempt to minimise their loss by finding alternative employment.

In other words, if an employee is dismissed without notice and justification and the following day secures a job which pays as well or

better than the job he or she has just lost, the claim for compensation under the contract will be reduced to zero. Even if employees do not have written contracts stipulating their salary and perks, they can still show by way of wage slips, pension statements and similar documents the benefits to which they are entitled to receive when it comes to calculating damages.

In addition to contractual rights, all employees who have completed more than two years' continuous employment have a right - provided by statute - not to be unfairly dismissed, regardless of whether or

not they have a written contract.

This two-year qualifying period is currently being challenged in the European Court and may, depending on its decision, be reduced. The Government has, in any event, made a commitment in its White Paper entitled *Fairness at Work* to reduce this qualifying period to one year.

Claims in respect of unfair dismissal must usually be submitted to an industrial tribunal within three months of dismissal. Contractual claims by contrast (including claims on written contracts) may be commenced in the courts up to six years from the date of dismissal.

Contractual claims can be heard in the industrial tribunal, provided that they are submitted within the three-month time limit. Although there is no requirement in these circumstances for the employee to have completed two years' continuous employment prior to submitting a claim, the tribunal only has the power to award compensation up to a maximum of £25,000. It is for this reason that larger contractual claims are usually pursued in the High Court.

Unfair dismissal compensation is made up of two parts: the basic award, subject to a maximum of between £110 and £30 for each year of employment depending on age, and the compensatory award, subject to a maximum of £12,000. Under proposals set out in *Fairness at Work*, this limit may be removed altogether.

What all this means is that employers may find dismissal a more expensive business in the future.

The writer is a partner and employment law specialist with City law firm Bird & Bird. He is also the author of the *'Which?' Guide to Employment*, which will be published in early September

Market uncertainty makes the future bright for gold

The central banks may be selling, but sales of coins to individuals are on the rise. Sovereigns and krugerrands are in, says John Andrew

IRONICALLY AT a time when bankers are dismissing the traditional view of gold being an asset of last resort and a haven against inflation, the European Union has passed a directive removing VAT from investments in gold, which includes bullion coins. After five years of discussions, this was made possible last month when Italy withdrew its formal objection. It is not anticipated that the UK legislation will become effective until January 2000, however.

It is also ironical at a time when central banks are selling their gold reserves, that small investors are buying gold coins. Sandra Ferguson of Spink's bullion department is noting a steady increase in the number of sales to individuals. "Most give the reason for buying as uncertainty. They consider the stock market is high, are worried about the crisis in Asia and are not sure of the impact of the euro." Some also consider gold to be cheap, as this week it was selling at around \$287 per ounce, which is only just above its 18-year low of \$283 reached in December 1997.

The two most popular buys are the British sovereign and the South African krugerrand. The sovereign is 22-carat gold and its pure gold content is 0.2354 troy ounces. Krugerrands are also 22-carat, but their pure gold content is exactly one troy ounce. In small quantities, sovereigns were selling for £49 each this week, but the price falls to £28 for orders over 50 coins. Krugerrands were retailing for £181, with the unit price falling marginally for larger orders.

Although bullion coins will be exempt from VAT next century, this will only result in a slight reduction in the price investors will pay. This is because despite VAT being imposed on bullion coins in April 1992 - a move that in effect discouraged trade in the material for individuals - a 1995 EU di-



From next year, there will be no VAT on investments in gold

rective gave dealers the option to sell any second-hand item worth less than £500 without collecting VAT on the retail price.

If the item is made from precious metal, it has to be sold above the market value of its metal content. Bullion coins such as sovereigns and krugerrands fall into this category providing that they are not newly minted, or have been imported from outside the EU. Dealers pay the tax on the difference between cost to them and the price at which the coin is sold. Of course, next century when VAT is entirely removed, the spread between buying and selling prices should narrow.

The recent increase in demand for the coins has resulted in a shortage of material in the market. Sellers are currently reluctant to part with bullion coins at these price levels. However, whereas in the past sellers would probably receive the spot gold price or even a sum just fractionally below, they now receive a premium. For example, this week Spink was offering £22 for a single sovereign, a coin with an intrinsic value at the spot gold

price of about £11. The 16 per cent spread of £7 on the retail price includes just over £1 in VAT and, of course, handling charges.

While the offered spread is high compared to traditional financial investments such as unit trusts, the fact remains that bullion coins are still the cheapest way for the individual to secure gold. Gold jewellery or accessories retain new at several multiples of the intrinsic value of their gold content.

The manufacturers' costs and mark-up as well as the wholesalers' and retailers' profit result in the actual value of the gold being a fraction of the retail price.

Buying gold jewellery or objects on the second-hand market will narrow the gap, but it is the less aesthetically pleasing pieces that sell for the lowest mark-up above the gold value. However, should you follow this route, do buy from a reputable dealer as all that glistens is not gold.

If you want to buy more gold for your money, then the best course is bullion coins as opposed to collectors' coins marketed to consumers by the world's mints. For example, the Royal Mint is currently marketing freshly minted

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GAVIN
GREEN

The days of the world car are at an end. The Germans may own Rover, but even the Brits are rediscovering their Britishness, just like the French and the Italians, too

upright design, in the classic British manner.

And it isn't just the Brits who are rediscovering their genes. In Italy, the renaissance is already under way.

Ironically it was begun by an American, Fiat's former

design boss Chris Bangie, now at BMW.

Bangie gave the world the amazing Fiat Coupé, a car whose body language could only have come from Italy.

The Fiat Punto is another classically Italian piece of

design brilliance, ditto the new Fiat Bravo hatchback.

The French have talented designers, but they have recently lost sight of their Frenchness.

This is about to change. Renault will show a new luxury car at this September's Paris Show which, in the words of Renault's design chief Patrick Le Quément, "is France's rediscovery of the art of building distinctive big saloons."

Peugeot and Citroën, now emboldened by new management, are also about to strut their Frenchness once more.

Citroën has been given the green light to be individual again, after too many years of timidity.

Even the Yanks want to be more Yank. Ford's new design chief, J Mays, in a gentle snub to his predecessor's "world car" philosophy, wants to make US Fords more different from European Fords.

"European Fords will be stylish, design-led and very distinctive."

"US Fords need to be tough, honest and unpretentious - just like our pick-up trucks," he said.

Just as the car business becomes more and more international - with Volkswagen building Bentleys, BMW making Rovers and GM running the Saab works - so the car makers will return to their roots to try to make more distinctive and more attractive cars.

In cars, over the past few years at any rate, it has been the Germans (in Europe) and the Japanese (everywhere else).

The new Renault Clio looks like the German-designed Vauxhall Corsa and drives in a solid, slightly heavy-footed Volkswagen manner.

Equally Citroëns and Peugeots mostly have a Germanic conservatism to their styling, with little of the quirkiness or wilfulness that once used to distinguish French cars.

Fiat went through a rather bland, anonymous phase back in the late Eighties and early Nineties. And British and Spanish cars have lost their idiosyncrasies as much as they've lost their national identities.

This is hardly surprising, as all current Rovers are based on Japanese Hondas and Seats are now engineered and made in Germany.

Volvo's now look like every other car, rather than like the motoring equivalent of a Russian shot-putter, and Saab - arguably once the builder of the quirkiest European cars of all - is now part of General Motors, the world's most conservative car company.

A few years back, most cars came out of a bland international melting pot of market-researched anonymity. Same-again styling was a disease that affected all companies from all countries.

But whereas the hamburger-and-jeans invasion of the world continues, in cars there are some encouraging signs of manufacturers rediscovering their pasts - even if, in Rover's case, it has been the Germans who have made them build proper British cars again.

Upcoming new models from Jaguar and Rover - both due to be unveiled at this October's Birmingham Show - will use styling cues from older cars. Both the new Rover 75 and the new Jaguar S-type will use curvaceous,

upright design, in the classic British manner.

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The Korean A-to-Z of all cubist cars

John Simister explains why the young machismo male would fight shy of a drive



The spirited Hyundai Atoz is surprisingly supple. With light and accurate steering, it keeps its composure on B roads, and that precarious feeling never emerges

SPECIFICATIONS	
Specifications	or three-speed automatic, front-wheel drive.
Prices: from £6,999 (Atoz) to £8,699 (Atoz+ auto)	Performance: 88mph, 0-60 in 14.7sec, 40-45mpg (manual), 85mph, 0-60 in 19.3sec, 34-39mpg (automatic).
Engine: 999cc, four cylinders, 12 valves, 55bhp at 5,500rpm.	Transmission: five-speed manual

RIVALS

Fiat Seicento S: £6,750. Cheapest of the new-look micro-Fiat's, and feels it. It has many neat design details, and sufficient space and pace to work as a viable car.

Daihatsu Move: £7,200. Smaller, slower, squarer and more turbulent than Atoz, but likeable for its low price and visual wackiness. A 2CV for the Nineties.

Alternatively you can buy the Atoz+ version, which adds a driver's airbag, alloy wheels, a cassette player (the base version has merely a simple radio), central locking, electric front windows, air-conditioning and front fog lamps, all of which is a good £1,000-worth.

Beyond that, you can have a clutchless transmission for £270, or a full-blown automatic gearbox for £699. Power steering is standard.

For all that, though, the Atoz is surprisingly lively, and it doesn't run out of puff on hills as readily as you might expect - even though that bluff

front has a lot of air to push aside.

The next pleasant surprise concerns the ride comfort.

Unlike the Daihatsu Move, which goes to pieces if you attempt a spirited drive on an unevenly-surfaced B-road, the little Hyundai keeps its composure and proves surprisingly supple.

The steering is light and accurate, and the expected feeling of precariousness doesn't materialise. All

that happens if you round a bend too quickly is that the front wheels drift outwards in an ever-widening arc.

The dashboard is more interesting than the Move's, too - all curves and cowls and potholes, like the nozzle of a hair-dryer. There's no glovebox as such, but plenty of shelves, pockets and cup-holders. The plastics are hard and shiny, though, and their fit is approximate in places.

As a cubist car, then, the Atoz works well, apart from that driver's legroom problem. The simplest solution here would be to re-engineer the seat mountings to raise the seat's front edge, thus providing a little more support for the thigh.

In the end, though, what does an Atoz offer that a normal supermini does not?

It offers the illusion of extra passenger space, the reality of potentially greater cargo space, the ability to slide into tighter parking spaces - thanks to its brevity - and a low price, to match the minimalist mechanics.

In some ways, it's a fine solution. To what problem, though, I'm not quite sure.

Incidentally, the Atoz is called Atoz in South Korea. Meaningless in Korean, the name was deemed less than optimal for English-speaking markets.

Trooper talents track through on the rough stuff

BIG DEAL. The latest Isuzu Trooper, powered by a new 3.5-litre petrol V6, accelerated almost as quickly as a Ford Mondeo 1.8. You get the point? It takes a lot of gas-guzzling power to make a heavy, brick-shaped 4x4 like the Trooper as fast as an ordinary car.

Forget about economy. Drive with anything but restraint and you'd be lucky to see 20mpg. Add to the list of woes ponderous steering, handling that leaves you marvelling at the nimbleness of a Mondeo, and a squirrely, restless ride. Accept these congenital defects, suffered by all big off-roaders, and the new Trooper is actually rather good.

Isuzu has come a long way since it made Hillman Minxes under licence. Commercials and off-roaders are now its forte. Diesels, too. The tough Trooper has earned a good reputation for dependability, especially on the rough stuff.

Restricted to road use, its talents are wasted, its extravagance exposed. But that's lifestyle for you.

People who don't need off-roaders continue to buy them. They like the feeling of irresistibility, of safety through mass. They like the lofty, see-all driving position, too.

More comfortable workhorse

drives a comfortable workhorse with guzzling power under its bonnet

opposition for power and torque. Throttle response is lag-free; acceleration brisk for a 4x4.

Refinement, though, takes a back seat here.

There's nothing coarse or noisy about the 112 mph V6. The engine is smooth, quiet, gutsy and willing. But for the way it slurps unleaded, it would get top marks.

Gear-changing is no chore, in spite of the beefy lever; and the steering is easy, if not precise. Normally, only the back wheels are driven, saving a bit on frictional losses. Four-wheel drive can be selected up to 60mph simply by pressing a button - and electronics do the rest.

The short-wheelbase three-door is lighter and more manoeuvrable than the longer and pricier five-door. It's the model to have if easy rear access and acres of space are not priorities. Trim and equipment

depends on the model. The Standard is pretty basic; the Citation is ludicrously plush.

The in-between Duty, with electric windows, central locking, and adjustable steering, and so on, is the popular choice.

If you want a comfortable, go-anywhere tank, the Trooper is a strong contender.

SPECIFICATION
Isuzu Trooper, from £19,100 (short Standard diesel) to £22,655 (long 3.5 Citation auto). Short petrol Citation on test, £23,650. Engine (petrol): 3494cc, 24-valve V6, 215bhp.

Transmission: five-speed manual /four-speed auto, front/all-wheel drive. Performance (manual): top speed 112 mph, 0-60mph in 11.0 seconds, 20.6mpg (combined).

Rivals: Chrysler Jeep 4.0 Limited, £22,885 - popular, but cramped Yankee muscle with lusty performance;

Ford Explorer, £26,295 - big, butch, stylish 4.0 petrol auto from the US;

Land Rover Discovery three-door V8 XS, £22,240 - revisions soon to Britain's best-selling big off-roader;

Mitsubishi Shogun 3.0 V6 GLS, £23,895 - more style less oomph than Trooper; SsangYong Musso 3.2 GX220, £25,613 - better than flash styling suggests. Mercedes engine makes it very fast; Toyota Land Cruiser Colorado three-door 3.0td GX, £24,965 - impressive diesel with lots of room and ability.



Forget economy. The Isuzu Trooper's V6 engine is smooth, quiet, and gutsy. But top marks for the way it slurps unleaded fuel

Chris Morris

Not only is it chic to own a Sixties car, but it can also prove to be tax effective, reports James Ruppert

If you love traditional, thoroughly British saloons, then the NEC in Birmingham will definitely be the place to be this October. That is because the International Motor Show will be witnessing two of the most significant new car launches of the last decade.

The Rover 75 and Jaguar S Type signal a return to those companies' roots, building sophisticated, medium-sized and distinctly middle-class motors.

So far the public has been teased with artists' renderings and car bodies draped in dust sheets. What we know for sure is that these are vital models that will compete head on with BMW, Audi and Mercedes in this sector of the market.

Ironically, both companies now belong to overseas owners, yet Ford, which runs Jaguar and BMW - which, similarly, have the final say at Rover - understand precisely what the appeal of a thoroughly British car ought to be.

Both cars must be solid, yet comfortable, with a certain sportiness and utterly traditional wood and walnut interiors.

However, some car buyers prefer to stick to the real thing. In the Sixties the moneyed professional doing well would probably have chosen a Jaguar Mark 2, or S-type, whereas the bank manager, or company executive climbing to the top might well have been seen in a respectable, yet technologically ambitious Rover 2000 or 3500 (also known as the P6).

In the Nineties it has never been more fashionable to be seen in one of these stylish old cars. We know this because *The Face* magazine recently told us so, but there also seems to be a strong undercurrent of born-again classic car owners who want a real Sixties original.

The stand-up comedian Jenny Eclair's first car was a Daimler 250, which has the same characterful shape as a Jaguar, but with a powerful V8 engine. "I have always loved the styling, and that was a really brilliant car," she says.

"Leather seats, beautiful bodywork and a wonderful engine. Driving it was so different from buzzing about in a silly little hatchback. Unfortunately, someone pinched it."

The desire to drive something out of the ordinary seems to be at the heart of the great British saloon car revival. "I knew that there were plenty of other people out there who wanted to drive something a little different," explains Bespoke's chairman, Mario Budwig.

His company provides contract-hire classic cars as direct substitutes



A classic Jaguar Mark 2 in good condition is still in great demand

Check that 4x4! It may have a genuine double

Criminals steal off-roaders and then 'ring' them with the identity of written-off vehicles, says James Ruppert

CAR CRIME is sexy. It must be, otherwise TV producers wouldn't be so eager to fill prime-time television with scenes of GTIs giving police the runaround on a housing estate.

You know the score by now - grainy video footage, high speeds, sirens, frantic commentary, maybe a collision, then a chase on foot, all finished off by the obligatory hovering helicopter with a heat-sensitive camera that picks up the thief hiding in a potting-shed.

Undeniably it is all rather exciting, and makes for brilliant, and cheap, TV. Recently you could tune into BBC's *X-Cars*, which follows the exploits of Manchester's stolen vehicle squad. Then there is *Police Stop!*, not only a highly successful television series, but also a multi-million video-to-buy phenomenon.

Even *World in Action* has got on to the bandwagon with its own investigation into car crime, uncovering scams with exciting slang names such as "ringing" and "cloning".

The police, the Home Office, the RAC and a company called HPI Equifax thought it was time to hold a Car Crime Clinic to explain the dangers of buying a used car.

Before the conference began, the video screen flickered not with a car chase, but with a soap - Coronation Street, to be precise. If you don't follow the programme, a recent storyline concerned Alma, the café proprietor, who bought a car. Mike, her husband, had bought a second-hand car but when Alma ran a check, she found it was stolen. The check that Alma did was an "HPI".

HPI-Equifax provides the motor trade and public with information on used vehicles by checking through a number of databases to establish the car's "hidden history".

If it is stolen, or an insurance write-off, or still subject to finance, the buyer avoids making a costly mistake.

All is revealed when a new picture is flashed on the screen - an utterly flattened and written-off Discovery to which the identity belonged. This car has been "ringed".

Unfortunately the most basic car-buying mistake is taking the registration V5 document at face value, which is never proof of ownership.

For the legitimate car trade, a "HPI" is a reflect action, but getting the public to do the same, particularly when buying privately, is proving to be more difficult.

Nick Webster, marketing director of HPI-Equifax, said that most cloned vehicles were poor-quality ringers. "If the crook doesn't bother to change the VIN number, then the HPI vehicle registration mark/VIN cross-check will reveal that there is something wrong."

I suggested to Tony Worthy, managing director of HPI, that the £28.50 fee might be the cause. "We don't find that our service is price sensitive; all we need to do is get the message across that we can help."

Owing to the transient nature of

HPI-Equifax: 01722 422422

Bored with your car? Drive the real thing

for hard-working company cars.

In bottom-line tax terms, the sums seem to make sense, as there are big savings to be made in running a classic car. The most favourable situation occurs when a vehicle is valued at less than £15,000 today and is more than 15 years old. Your personal tax liability is then based upon the car's purchase price when new.

So take a Jaguar Mark 2 with an original list price of £1,500 and compare that with a new Vauxhall Vectra at £14,000, the same price as a decent Mk2 will set you back. Then clock up between 2,500 and 17,999 business miles and gasp in amazement as your benefit-in-kind scale charge amounts to £233.33, as opposed to £3,266.66.

What that means is an annual tax bill of £93.33 in the Jag, as opposed to £1,306.66 in the Vectra.

"We did not realise the advantages of this scheme, until someone else pointed it out," says Mr Budwig.

"I started this venture, purely as an enthusiast, because for the last 20 years I've driven classics full time. I started with a 280 Riley 1.5, I had Volvo Amazon, Alfasuds, Jaguar E-types, and I even drove a Ford V8 Pilot as everyday transport for three years. The idea is to put the buzz back into driving and make every trip enjoyable again."

The Jaguar specialists JD Classics, in Essex, are also finding customers more than ready to invest in an older saloon, and treat them as an everyday proposition. "The market for small Jaguar saloons is getting stronger," says Derek Hood, the director.

"Our customers are bored by most modern cars, and fed up with depreciation. They have looked at modern Jaguars, Mercedes and Audis, but in the end they are prepared to spend around £70,000 on one of our cars."

The way the company operates is to take an original and sound Jaguar, and then rebuild it to customer requirements. Their JD Sport Mark 2 has been developed over a 10-year period and is up-rated to perform as reliably and competently as any modern car.

The engine is completely rebuilt to produce more than 300 bhp. Moreover, you may choose any type of gearbox, from automatic to a close-ratio sports.

Tyres, suspension and brakes are all modified to cope with the extra performance, and easily out-handle the less than perfect original.

Inside, there is full leather, rather than areas of period vinyl, the seats have been remade to be more comfortable than before - and the dashboard is completely re-enforced.

There is no need to flog the any

bulging history file and cost a realistic £1,950.

When it comes to Rovers, there are fewer specialists, but none more dedicated than JP Restorations in Lancashire. I spoke to John Wood, the owner.

"The demand for the Rover P6 is phenomenal," he said. "We don't in fact sell cars, but restore them for customers who are prepared to pay up to £10,000 for that work. Then they use them every day."

"What they want are characterful and reliable vehicles, and the Rover fits the bill."

The company also have several mid-Sixties examples in stock, and it is hard to tell the difference between them and a modified model. When I visited there was even an S Type, essentially a Mark 2 with a larger boot, which had been sympathetically upgraded in the interests of everyday use.

"We made the market for those cars when the Queen's eye surgeon came to us and asked for his S Type to be modified," said Mr Hood with a smile.

The company also have several examples of respectable Sixties saloons are still doing very well for themselves, thank you very much.

JD Classics 01245 400060; John Brown 01763 632200; JP Restorations 01706 854017; Bespoke 0181 421 5626.

Thumbing through classic car advertisements, you see that one of these Rovers can easily be acquired in tidy condition for less than £2,000.

So however the new Jaguar and Rover models are received at the Birmingham show, the original (and some might argue the best) examples of respectable Sixties saloons are still doing very well for themselves, thank you very much.

JD Classics 01245 400060;

John Brown 01763 632200;

JP Restorations 01706 854017;

Bespoke 0181 421 5626.

Unfortunately the most basic car-buying mistake is taking the registration V5 document at face value, which is never proof of ownership.

For the legitimate car trade, a "HPI" is a reflect action, but getting the public to do the same, particularly when buying privately, is proving to be more difficult.

Detective Superintendent Bernie Watson, Head of the Surrey Police Stolen Vehicle Squad, explained that cloning involved taking the identity of a legitimately owned vehicle and putting it on to the stolen car. A fraudulent application for a vehicle identity is then made at the Post Office, while the buyer is told that the registration document has been sent off to the DVLA. "People fall for it regularly. They don't check everything, and they should," he said.

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Owing to the transient nature of

HPI-Equifax: 01722 422422

MY WORST CAR

TIM SUGDEN'S RENAULT 12



My Renault would run for 15 minutes and then need a rest for 20 minutes

TO FINANCE my racing career, I spent several years in the motor trade - and to be honest dozens of really bad cars passed through my hands.

One that sticks in my mind, though, is a Renault 12 about the time that I was racing the Formula Fords. I was absolutely skint, but managed to scrape together £75 to buy the Renault.

It looked tidy enough, but had this peculiar habit of running for 15 minutes then stopping dead, and the engine would not fire again for a further 20 minutes.

There was no way that I could afford to have it fixed, although I discovered that if I drove it for just 12 minutes, then drove it for five, it would start immediately.

I ran it for maybe six months and got used to it. That meant and carefully planning every

journey, using a stopwatch, having a pile of magazines to read - and I'd also pack a sleeping bag.

Then there was my first Mini van, which had all the usual faults like a major rust problem. In fact, all the time that I owned the car, it had a flat battery which I could not afford to replace. I always parked on a hill, or incline, in order to jump-start it.

On one occasion, exiting a pub car park, the A panel adjacent to the driver's door had rusted through and jammed it shut. Unfortunately I had already pushed the Mini off and was struggling to get in. I had to run around to the passenger side, catch it up, unlock the door and jump in. I averted disaster by inches.

Another problem with that van was the gear linkage, which would come adrift and only

leave me with reverse gear. Only a rusty nail would hold the linkage in place, and if that broke I was stranded.

On one occasion I parked just off a motorway junction to go to a nearby meeting. When I returned, I had the misfortune to find that the nail had broken, so the only way out was to reverse home 3 miles.

As I did this, I overtook a lorry, but had to stop because the engine was overheating. When it had cooled down, I overtook him again. I think that happened four times before he ran up to the car and said: "Put me out of my misery, this has got to be Candid Camera."

Tim Sugden finished 4th at this year's Le Mans in an EMDA Team McLaren and last year won the Privilege Insurance GT Championship which currently he is leading.

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Walking on water made easy

You may crave a wooden floor but fear the effect on your neighbours. Good news is at hand. Cork tiles have gone upmarket, and you can cover your floor with pretty designs. By Rosalind Russell

Choosing flooring must be one of the few home decor decisions that is likely to have as much impact on your neighbours as it does on your own property. Ask any flat owner.

The noise of adults, boisterous toddlers and dogs clattering around overhead on fashionable wood strip flooring can be intensely irritating. In fact some leases stipulate that floors must be carpeted to minimise un-neighbourly nuisance.

But there are stylist alternatives to wall-to-wall carpet.

Cork tiles - once as appealing as wallpaper ties and Hessian wallpaper - have been reinvented dramatically and have moved upmarket.

Art school graduate Alice Balfour was twiddling her thumbs waiting for Sotheby's to offer her a full-time job when she came up with her Great Idea. Despite grumbles from her father at being barred from using his own loo for two days, she set about re-decorating the lavatory floor. Alice laid cut-out pictures of gold coins and medals on a red cork background on the floor and varnished it. Everyone admired the result, including an old friend who told her she had great ideas but was hopeless at business.

While Alice spent two years developing her product, the friend, Mark Findlay, went off and did an MBA business course. Now the pair design, produce and sell Harvey Maria floor tiles and have moved from a kitchen-table operation into proper offices and a fully fledged business.

Their decorative tiles are unlike most others you are likely to see.

Imaginative and amusing, the Outdoor and Manor collections have a cork base and photographic laminate finish, while the Eastern collection has a hand-painted and lacquered finish.

The Manor collection includes Library, hand-cut letters on paper textures, and Gallery. Dutch Old Master portraits set in a traditional 15th century floor tile design.

"The Old Masters tiles were inspired by the time I spent working in an arts course at Sotheby's," says Alice, a trained silversmith.

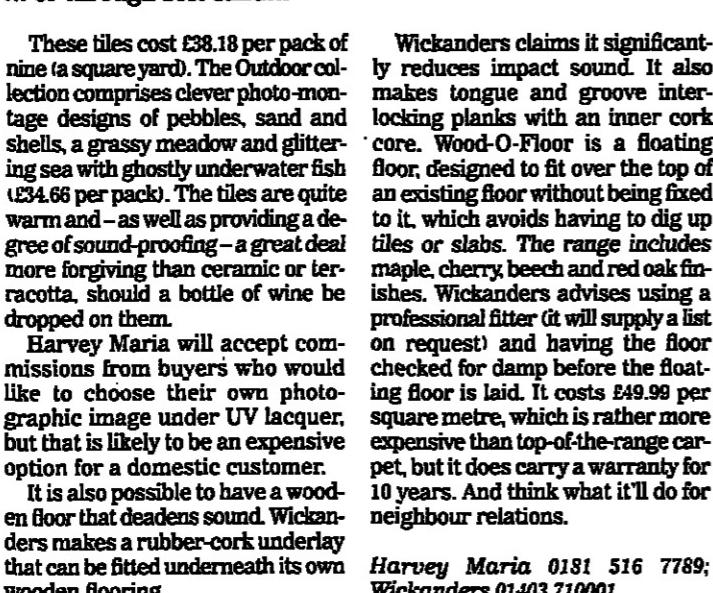
Access to old catalogues with pictures by Vermeer produced the idea for the Old Master tiles. They look perfect in a hallway, especially in a Victorian house, but some buyers have been sensitive about treading on the portraits' faces.



You can step through a spring meadow...



... or through soft sand...



These tiles cost £38.18 per pack of nine (a square yard). The Outdoor collection comprises clever photo-montage designs of pebbles, sand and shells, a grassy meadow and glittering sea with ghostly underwater fish (£34.66 per pack). The tiles are quite warm and - as well as providing a degree of sound-proofing - a great deal more forgiving than ceramic or terracotta should a bottle of wine be dropped on them.

Harvey Maria will accept commissions from buyers who would like to choose their own photographic image under UV lacquer, but that is likely to be an expensive option for a domestic customer.

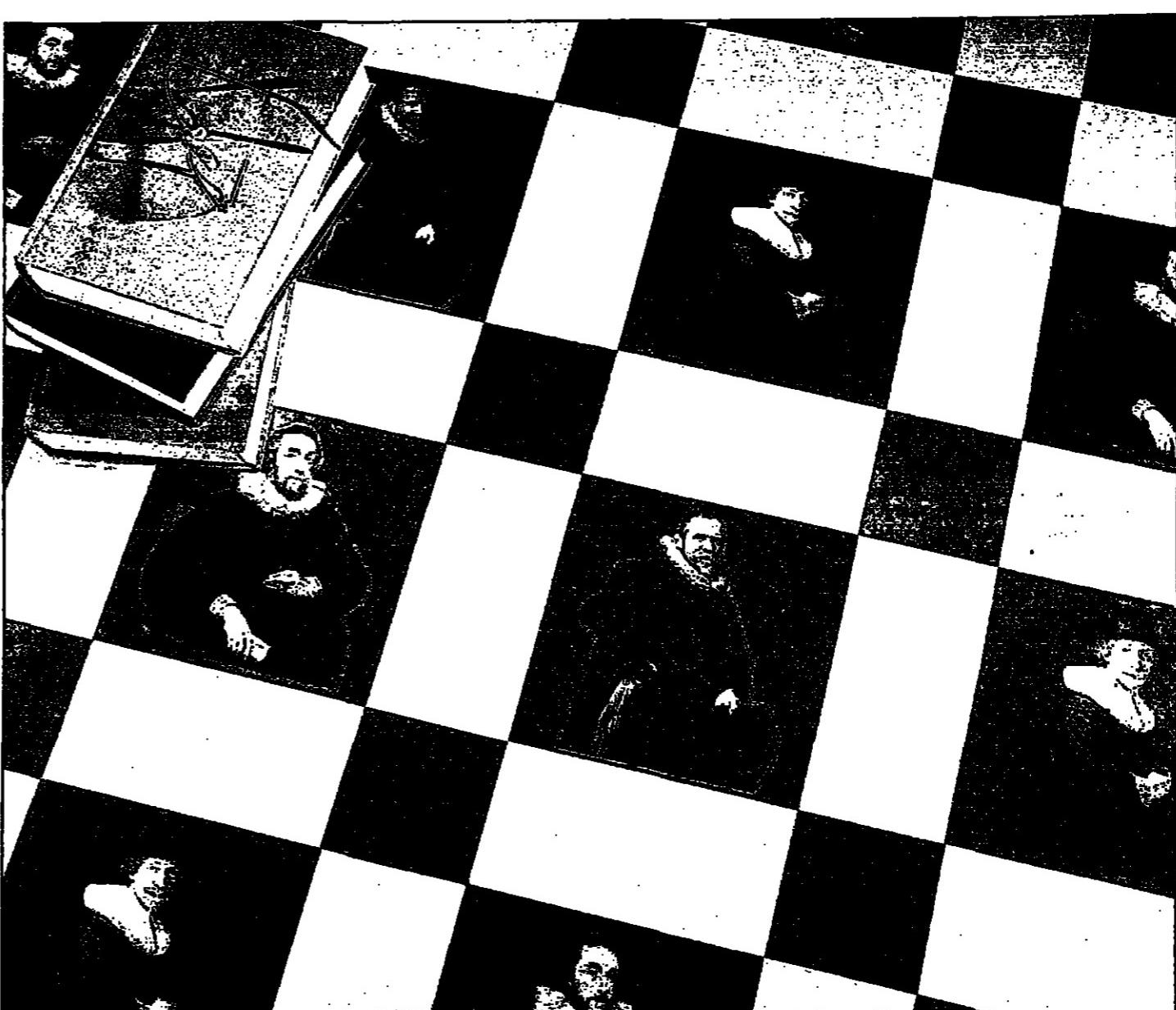
It is also possible to have a wooden floor that deadens sound. Wickanders makes a rubber-cork underlay that can be fitted underneath its own wooden flooring.

Wickanders claims it significantly reduces impact sound. It also makes tongue and groove interlocking planks with an inner cork core. Wood-O-Floor is a floating floor, designed to fit over the top of an existing floor without being fixed to it, which avoids having to dig up tiles or slabs. The range includes maple, cherry, beech and red oak finishes. Wickanders advises using a professional fitter (it will supply a list on request) and having the floor checked for damp before the floating floor is laid. It costs £49.99 per square metre, which is rather more expensive than top-of-the-range carpet, but it does carry a warranty for 10 years. And think what it'll do for neighbour relations.

Harvey Maria 0181 516 7789; Wickanders 01403 710001



... or even walk on water!



The Gallery range includes portraits culled from Dutch Old Masters. Some clients don't like to walk on them

Commitment-free in the country

A little weekend retreat may seem an elusive fantasy.

But share-renting a cottage or farmhouse is an option. Penny Jackson explains how

pub, close to water and with a large garden and storage. Amazingly we found it," says Jenni. "So far the arrangement has been working perfectly. We sat down and worked out exactly how to divide up the time even allocating bank holidays, Christmas, New Year and Easter. If we need to swap it is usually a problem."

They'd also pre-empted any wildly differing tastes by agreeing on neutral furnishings and only certain colours for bits and pieces bought for the kitchen. "If one of us finds a picture or something they're not sure about, we check with the others before buying it."

But the mood between sharers can quickly turn murderous if a relaxing week in cottage begins with emptying smelly bins, cleaning sinks and clearing away the detritus of someone else's riotous weekend. Jenni and her co-tenants prepared for every scenario. "We drew up a set of rules that we stick to rigidly. No keys must be lent and if anything is used up it must be replaced. We are really strict about drinks. If someone were to arrive on a Friday night knowing they had left a bottle of champagne and three bottles of wine only to find

them gone, it would be disastrous. Finishing up the bit of cheese in the fridge isn't quite the same thing!", she adds. So far, no one has turned up to unwashed bed linen and a chaotic house. "We always strip the beds and tidy everything before we go. It becomes a habit on a Sunday morning. Someone comes to cut if we can be found at all."

In shared passion for gardening was one of the factors that had impressed their landlord. Not everyone is keen to offer a lease to three people, none of whom will be living there all the time, but if their idea of a perfect weekend is weeding and mulching then it's a different matter.

The agent also persuaded him that as we were professional, in our forties and two of us lawyers, we were a safe bet," adds Jenni. "The great thing is that if it doesn't work out we have nothing to lose. None of us wanted to take out a second mortgage for our own place."

In Norfolk, though, Malcolm Duffey of agents Belton Duffey suggests that in the long run it might not cost any more to buy outright. Renting in the popular coastal regions would be expensive since the amount paid over a year has to buy out the lu-

creative summer months. Not many owners would regard their seasonal goldmine worth trading for a 12-month lease. A pretty cottage some 12 miles or so from the coast would cost about £235,000 a month to rent, if it could be found at all.

In north Cornwall, the story is much the same. John Bray & Partners in Rock can provide short-term lets but nothing for a year since owners can expect as much as £1,200 a week in the summer season. Lane Fox in Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire has only a few suitable properties to let as second homes - a thatched cottage in Dinton at £625 a month and a barn conversion at Dorton for £695.

In Oxfordshire, Strutt & Parker's Newbury office has steady demand from London. "The main concern of landlords is that a property should not be neglected by tenants understandably reluctant to spend part of their weekends doing chores", says Amanda Denton. "While owners might prefer to see a lease in just one name, the possibility of a joint tenancy depends entirely on who is involved". An estate cottage in Pusey will shortly be available for renting at £1,500 a month through Strutt & Parker.

Not surprisingly, the Grays have just bought their own place in Cornwall. It was Rose's decision: "At least we'll keep our friends this way".



New Farnham cottage, £250 pcm unfurnished



The Old Stable house, Kingston Bagpuize, £900 pcm

Pay now, move in later

With a little vision, you can plan your perfect house by buying it before it is finished. By Mary Wilson

Buying a property off-plan – in the early days before any construction has started, or more usually some time before the property is completed – is something UK buyers have been doing more and more until recently. And when prices are rising strongly, some purchasers take advantage of the hike in values and sell their property without ever moving in.

"Over the past two years there have been a few people buying early at all our developments and selling them on before they are completed. At Barnes Village, south-west London, someone apparently made a 20 per cent profit," says Ros Hettred, marketing manager for Berkeley Homes (Thames Valley). "It's all to do with trusting the developer sufficiently to deliver what it promises".

At Victoria Quay, a development by Linden Homes of 99 houses and flats at Ocean Village in Southampton, Hampshire, several people bought two or three apartments earlier this year. "They have all kept one for themselves and sold the others to reduce their borrowings," says Philip Davies, chairman of Linden Homes. There are nine townhouses left, selling from £14,950 to £249,550.

Even large detached houses have been bought off-plan in order to sell on. "We had five large houses in Esher which were around £600,000 each," says Tony Pridley of Thirlestane Homes. "Three people got together; put down a deposit of 10 per cent and bought the lot just after we had got planning. Just before they were completed they flipped them and made a good healthy profit."

For people who intend to live in the property, advantages of buying off-plan include the chance to pick the best plot, choose the fixtures and fittings and make internal alterations.

Annie and Jack O'Brien bought a house from Bryant Country Homes in June, hoping to be able to move in at the end of September. "It's not the first new house we have bought, but it is the first one we have bought off-plan," says Annie.

The O'Briens saw the development, Lytton Park in Cobham, Surrey when the foundations were going down. "We liked what we saw from the plans, but did a lot of homework before we decided to buy, looking at many other properties. We went for



Annie and Jack O'Brien bought off-plan when they saw the foundations. "You have to have a lot of vision when looking at plots of land"

John Lawrence

the Bryant house because it gave us what we wanted and, of course, we could choose the colours of the kitchen and bathrooms.

"We waited as long as we could to see what the finish would be like and a week before the show-house opened, signed on the dotted line. You have to have a lot of vision when looking at plots of land and unfinished houses and a lot of people find that difficult," Annie says.

The O'Briens are in rented property with a contract that runs out at the end of September. What happens if the building programme should be delayed? "We have thought of that," says Annie. "We can extend our tenancy for another month, but hope

that as the house had its roof on when we bought it, there should not be any problems." Hamptons is selling the remaining 13 five-bedroom properties from £715,000 to £850,000.

Finance is not normally a problem. Lenders are quite *cavilli* with off-plan buying. Once you have put down your 10 per cent deposit they will probably have a look at the site early on and then return a week before completion. Once satisfied, the mortgage will be agreed in time for you to pay the final 90 per cent.

Uncertainty about the completion date is the main worry, especially if you are paying two mortgages while you wait. "You can never be

sure that the build programme does not slip, although builders add on quite a few months to cover themselves," says Gill Lamprell of Knight Frank. "In most cases, developers are within their original projected dates by two to three months".

Tony Carey, managing director of St George, says that about 50 per cent of his developments are sold off-plan, the rest before they are completely finished. "From a developer's point of view it's all to do with striking a balance. It is nice to have finance in hand early but not so far ahead that you cannot take advantage of rising prices," he says.

Carey reckons that people like buying early because it helps them to

plan their life. "It could take a year to sell a property and it means they can take their time," he says. St George is selling off-plan apartments at locations all over London.

Both Tony Carey and Paul Valone of Berkeley Homes stress that communication between developer and customer is the most important thing. "You need to keep them informed as to what is happening," says Vallone. Should completion be delayed, the purchaser has no recourse to compensation. But the contract gives the developer the right to demand that the purchaser completes.

In South Wales, Wilton Homes has seen a record number of purchasers

buying from plans. "Such sales have accounted for more than half the region's developments," says David Swindenbank, area sales manager. "People reserve a property they have not seen in order to get the house type and the plot they want. It also gives them added time. At a development in Uxbridge, one buyer was able to complete his purchase before going abroad on business for three months."

Berkeley Homes, 01932 868555; Linden Homes, 01703 366399; Thirlestane Homes, 01932 350900; Hamptons, 01372 463411; St. George, 0181 917 4000; Knight Frank, 0171 821 8171; Wilton Homes, 0800 0711400



PENNY JACKSON

THE TEMPTATION to sell your house without an agent is compelling, especially when everyone says how lovely it is and how easy it would be to find a buyer.

Janice Plummer certainly thought so, until she found herself the victim of bogus buyers. She had read articles about time-wasters but always thought they must be easy to spot.

She advertised her Wiltshire home and sifted through the dozen or so enquiries. One of the couples who came to see it loved it immediately and said they would buy it for the full asking price.

It all seemed too easy. They came back to measure up for curtains; they sent a surveyor round and talked enthusiastically about living there. Since even postponed a week's holiday to hurry things along. And then silence.

She rang, she wrote, but no reply. It turned out their address was false and she guesses probably their names. Even agents can be caught out by the most plausible, and everyone is left wondering why anyone should waste their time.

At the top of the market many agents require references before showing properties, but that should not be necessary for a three-bedroom converted stable.

THE LATEST note of warning about the housing market has come from Black Horse Agencies. Their report this week on new homes finds that buyers' confidence has been affected by uncertainty on interest rates. In Scotland, builders are choosing to take less profit in order to remain competitive.

Fewer people, it seems, are now buying off-plan, often choosing to see the show home first. They are also hunting down deposit-paid schemes, part-exchange and often expect some white goods and soft furnishings within the price.

Among those features people most want to see in a new house are higher ceilings, larger showers and a study or playroom.

Go undercover to pick your perfect agent

It's an important decision – so pose as a customer and check out estate agencies, advises Ginetta Vedrickas

CHOOSING AN estate agent can be even more traumatic than deciding to move. What questions should you ask? And who will best earn their 2 per cent? Selling an inherited property brings an opportunity to compare agents and their approaches. I make three appointments and wait.

9.40am. Open door to young and very small boy, Jeff, who bounds around like an affectionate puppy. Assures me he knows area intimately – "my girlfriend lives round the corner" – and soon gets me as over-excited as he is: "You're looking at loads of money." Effect spilling by long phone call to his boss: "It's a tricky one." Glean from eavesdropping that boss, like Jeff, has no idea where house is, or its value. Jeff confides he "loves his job". Who wouldn't after six months? Leaves with a whimper.

10.30am. Kevin bangs on door. Looks rough. Explains he was up late watching football. Appears more mature apart from his brace. Sits down for lengthy chat. Kevin seems receptive to questions. "How many clients are looking for this type of property?" "Lots", offers Kevin. Eventually gives truly tempting valuation and for lowest fee, 1 per cent, so I promise to be tough.

11.30am. Receive call from mobile phone. Giovanni will be late (football fever again). Finally open door to clever person who shatters all pre-conceptions about excitable Latinos.

Giovanni's lip curls as he looks round. Get sinking feeling, synonymous with mechanic looking under bonnet. Wait for property equivalent of "your big end's gone". Not surprised when Giovanni suggests selling to developers and, naturally, he can recommend some. His valuation is £50,000 less than Kev's. Close door reeling in confusion and determine to seek further advice.

Ian Dickson, director of Winkworth, Shepherd's Bush, says: "You are making a huge financial commitment and must be confident that the agent will do a good job. If he puts you off, will he put buyers off?" He finds the choice of agent "varies dramatically" depending on whether you are buying or selling. "The man might be the biggest creep in the world but if he's got the right property at the right price, and you're buying, who cares?" Some agents may not know their market and will undersell properties. "It's great for buyers but not sellers."

Mr Dickson believes overpricing is more common among agents and finds that many vendors simply choose whoever gives the highest valuation. "It's a common ploy but sellers frequently find that, within weeks, the agent wants you to reduce the price to the figure suggested by the middle man. We get vendors coming to us who feel they have been tricked."

But how can you ensure that your valuation is accurate? Most



Loads of 'For Sale' signs, but what about the value of the homes being sold? Overpricing by agents appears to be common

agents suggest asking for proof of comparable sales. Confirm their accuracy by asking to see property details and make comparisons in terms of location, size and condition. This involves research on your part but it may be worthwhile.

Your valuation may be realistic but is your agent competent? Carol Sutton eventually sold her three-bedroom semi in Surrey, but only after changing agents. "In three months

the first hardly sent anyone round to view and the ones he did send were looking for something completely different," she recalls. So how can vendors minimise inefficiency? Ian Dickson advises: "Go into the office and look at the quality of staff. Inexperienced 17-year-olds probably won't give as good a service as people who know a lot about what they are selling."

He goes further: "Pose as a buyer and see what reception you get. Ring up and say what you are looking for. They may offer to send details but also be aware that bigger firms frequently move agents around, so their local knowledge may be inadequate compared with that of a small company's employees."

Is it better to choose a large chain rather than a small business? "I wouldn't condemn the one-office operation. They may know their area thoroughly and have reciprocal agreements with others, but do

check how much exposure they can give to your property." Vendors should also be aware that bigger firms frequently move agents around, so their local knowledge may be inadequate compared with that of a small company's employees."

Before choosing an agent: Check that they belong to a trade association; meet the manager and staff; pose as a buyer; look at comparables and check property details; ask how much coverage they will give your property.

Winkworth, Shepherd's Bush: 0181 739 3394; Bruton & Co: 0171 229 9202

scraping around for business." Someone who isn't scraping around is Gordon Blaustein, of Notting Hill agency Bruton & Co. What makes him estate agent of the year? "My glittering personality I suppose." He compares choosing a good agent to finding a solicitor. "Ask neighbours and colleagues in the area in which you wish to buy. Test out their local reputation. The agent with the highest profile is not necessarily the best."

He counsels against agents who operate simply as marketing companies. "It works, but they are often interested only in getting the deal done rather than obtaining the best for their clients. We want the best, but not necessarily today. We sometimes advise clients to wait and they may be able to get a bit more."

The National Association of Estate Agents asks prospective members to complete a written test and lays down guidelines. The NAEA is also campaigning for the industry to be licensed.

Gordon adds a cautionary note about pricing: "We work on comparables but also take into account how much people are willing to pay. Prices will never rise if we relied solely on surveyors' valuations." Most agents say that publicity is important, but Gordon is philosophical: "One good negotiator is worth a dozen pages of adverts."

Before choosing an agent: Check that they belong to a trade association; meet the manager and staff; pose as a buyer; look at comparables and check property details; ask how much coverage they will give your property.

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